

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Amnesty International calls on the European Commission to take action against Italy

(Brussels, 21 March 2005) Amnesty International has today sent an urgent letter to the European Commissioner for Justice Freedom and Security, Franco Frattini calling for the Commission to break its silence over Italy's forcible return to Libya of people arriving by boat on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa.

Amnesty International says Italy's actions are in breach of the country's obligations under the UN Refugee Convention by not allowing those who may have a valid asylum claim to be properly assessed.

In addition, according to Protocol 4 to the European Convention on Human Rights, the Italian government is prohibited from expelling entire groups of people, without properly considering each individual's situation.

Amnesty International's letter to Commissioner Frattini states:

"For the third time in six months, Amnesty International feels compelled to address the Commission with regard to Italy's deportation practice. On 17 March 2005, the Italian authorities forcibly returned 180 people to Libya, where they may be at risk of torture. Despite strong protests by various organisations including the UNHCR, Italy is reportedly planning further deportations. The authorities appear to be rushing to deport people from Lampedusa, and are doing so without proper scrutiny of the individual cases".

Amnesty International calls on the Commission (which is charged with upholding the EU Acquis and taking action against EU Member States in breach of the principles defined by the Common European Asylum System) to publicly distance itself from these actions and express concern at reports of the recent deportations.

Amnesty International believes the Commission should properly investigate this case and cannot only rely on Italy's declarations. It should also urge the Italian authorities to grant access to a fair and satisfactorily asylum procedure, including access to adequate legal assistance and competent interpretation. The Commission should also ask the Italian authorities to give the UNHCR prompt access to all the detainees in Lampedusa and Crotone and to stop deportations in breach of international standards.

Amnesty International and the UNHCR are all the more concerned that Libyan officials have been in Lampedusa recently, and, according to the Italian Minister of the Interior, they have been allowed into the centre to collaborate with the Italian authorities in identifying people-traffickers. Amnesty International believes that this would be likely to put any detainees later returned to Libya in grave danger. Non-Libyan nationals would risk detention on charges including illegal entry into and exit from Libya.

The full text of Amnesty International's letter is [available](#).

For further comment/background and interviews:
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