

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EU OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: IOR 61/015/2006
News Service No:
23 May 2006

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT 2006 SHOWS GROWING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFICIT IN EUROPE

EMBARGO: 10.00 GMT (12.00 BRUSSELS TIME) ON TUESDAY 23 MAY 2006

(Brussels, 23 May 2006) 2005 was an uncomfortable year for the European Union, says Amnesty International on the day it publishes its annual report on the state of human rights in the world.

In this year's edition almost all EU Member States are included in the report - an indication of persistent human rights shortcomings in Europe.

The EU faced embarrassing exposure of its shortcomings in the area of asylum and "irregular" migration. At the same time, Member States were confronted with unprecedented scrutiny over methods used to fight terrorism.

"The CIA rendition scandal has put European governments on the defensive by exposing some of the disturbing practices carried out in the name of fighting terrorism. But its only the more public side of an erosion of rights that has taken place in Europe," said Dick Oosting, director of Amnesty's EU Office.

The increasing failure to protect asylum seekers and uphold the rights of migrants is another reflection of the current defensive climate. More than half of EU Member States are included in Amnesty's report because of shortcomings in this area.

Although Europe received fewer asylum requests than in previous years, governments reacted as if the opposite was true, introducing restrictive laws which fail to guarantee basic protection and sometimes using force to keep people out.

"What has been portrayed as an asylum crisis is really a protection crisis. Europe is not a welcoming continent for those fleeing persecution", said Dick Oosting.

Abusive treatment by law enforcement officials was another frequent problem registered in the report, often aimed at foreign communities and other minorities.

"The deterioration of human rights standards we see across Europe has broader implications: it weakens the EU's legitimacy to denounce abuses of other countries and it risks undermining the EU's essential role in the global protection of human rights", says Oosting.

With the latest human rights review dating from before the attacks of 9/11, Amnesty International reiterates its call for the EU to develop a new coherent policy that addresses today's challenges.

For further comment/background and interviews:

Amnesty International EU Office (Brussels)

Tel: +32-2-5021499

Fax: +32-2-5025686

Email: AmnestyIntl@aieu.be

Web-site: <http://www.amnesty-eu.org>