

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE**

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### **EU-US SUMMIT: END THE EU'S EMBARRASSING SILENCE ON US TORTURE**

### **OPEN LETTER FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**

#### **EMBARGO:**

**00.01 GMT THURSDAY 24 JUNE 2004 (02.01 BRUSSELS/01.01 DUBLIN)**

(Brussels 24 June 2004) In an Open Letter released on the eve of the EU-US summit in Ireland, Amnesty International calls on the Irish Presidency of the European Union to end the EU's embarrassing silence in the face of the United States' ongoing breaches of fundamental human rights and humanitarian law principles in the pursuit of its "war on terror" and in Iraq.

The Open Letter says President George W. Bush should not leave Ireland without a clear message from the EU: that torture and ill-treatment must never be encouraged, condoned or ignored, and that the EU therefore expects its single-most important partner to abide by the absolute ban on torture laid down in international law.

The Open Letter, signed by the Director of Amnesty International's EU Office in Brussels, Dick Oosting, and the Executive Director of Amnesty International Ireland, Sean Love, points out that the EU's new constitution approved by EU leaders in Brussels only six days ago, affirms the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as the bedrock of the European Union.

The EU-US summit will be the first major test of the EU's commitment to live up to the principles of its newly adopted constitution, says Amnesty International.

The Open Letter states that while the Council of the EU in May 2004 expressed its "abhorrence at evidence of mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners" in reaction to the release of photographs showing the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US agents, there has been no indication that this has at any stage been taken up by the EU officially and forcefully with the US government.

In addition, for more than two years, the EU Council has stood by in silence while the US has detained hundreds of individuals at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, in a legal black hole, and has ignored calls by the European Parliament and EU civil society to speak up before the US Supreme Court on behalf of foreign nationals being held to press their right to judicial review.

"Surely now is the moment for the EU to back up its concern with robust calls on President Bush to ensure that the US opens the doors of its detention facilities not only in Iraq, but also in Afghanistan, Guantánamo and other undisclosed locations elsewhere to United Nations human rights experts and independent international human rights monitors," Amnesty International's letter states.

"It is particularly disturbing in this regard that one of the EU's own members, the United Kingdom, has also been implicated in reports of abuse of prisoners. Amnesty International notes with regret that the Council has also been utterly silent on this matter, which risks weakening the legitimacy with which it can address the US government."

**Documents available on [www.amnesty-eu.org](http://www.amnesty-eu.org) and [www.news.amnesty.org](http://www.news.amnesty.org)**

*Amnesty International Open Letter to the President of the European Council Bertie Ahern on the occasion of the EU-US Summit 25-26 June 2004.*

*Amnesty International Report: The Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula: Human rights fall victim to the "war on terror", 22 June 2004.*

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