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## **The Unheard Truth: World leaders must change debate on poverty and human rights**

(New York) In the run up to the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October, Amnesty International called on world leaders and policy makers to change the debate on poverty from economics to addressing the human rights problems that impoverish and keep people poor.

Amnesty International's Secretary General Irene Khan stated: "Poverty is the world's worst human rights crisis."

"Discrimination, state repression, corruption, insecurity and violence are as much defining features of poverty as the lack of material resources. These human rights problems can't simply be solved by raising income levels," said Irene Khan.

"Material benefits alone do not guarantee an end to discrimination, or improve security or give voice to those living in poverty. Investment in agriculture may boost crop yields for poor farmers but does not guarantee security of tenure against unscrupulous land owners. Building new schools doesn't guarantee that girls will have the same access to education as boys.

"In many countries economic growth levels may be high but people's right to be informed and consulted in public policy is ignored; their right to express their views and be heard is curtailed. The poor are shut out and ignored.

"Any successful poverty alleviation strategy must empower the poor to claim their rights, so that they can control their destiny and can hold decision makers to account."

Launching her book *The Unheard Truth: Poverty and Human Rights* in New York, Irene Khan argued that eradication of poverty requires respect of economic, social and cultural rights – such as health care, education and housing – along side civil and political rights.

"There can be no sequenced or partial approach to human rights if we want to solve poverty. Demanding participation rights is as important as directing resources to meet basic needs for food, health and shelter. Protecting people against violence is as crucial as ending discrimination. Reducing maternal mortality calls for better health care but also for the improvement of the status of women."

With ten chapters addressing topics such as why freedom matters, discrimination, the poverty trap, maternal mortality, slums, corporate accountability and legal empowerment, *The Unheard Truth* calls for justice and empowerment for the world's poor and puts a human face to a problem that is all too often illustrated by abstract statistics.

The Unheard Truth marks a new phase in Amnesty International's worldwide campaign to Demand Dignity in which world leaders will be targeted and challenged to address human rights abuses that drive and deepen poverty.

"The fight to end poverty is this generation's greatest struggle. We will win it if we put freedom, justice and equality at its core," said Irene Khan.

#### Notes to Editors

- With a foreword by Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General, The Unheard Truth combines Khan's front line experiences as a human rights defender with comprehensive social analysis and stunning photography.
- More information about the book is available at [www.theunheardtruth.org](http://www.theunheardtruth.org)
- Book events are planned in various countries, including USA, Canada, Australia, the UK, South Korea, Finland and the Netherlands.
- This book is part of Amnesty International's global campaign called Demand Dignity which calls for an end to the human rights violations that drive and deepen poverty. The Demand Dignity campaign mobilizes people all over the world to demand that governments and corporations listen to the voices of those living in poverty and respect their rights.
- The Demand Dignity campaign was launched in the slums of Kenya in June with a global call to end forced evictions. The campaign was taken to Sierra Leone in September where it focused on reducing maternal mortality.
- A selection of still photos from the book, a news access tape and a book summary is available.
- Endorsements include Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General (from the foreword) "Irene makes a convincing case for putting human rights at the center of the effort to end poverty ....". Professor Muhammad Yunus: "The Unheard Truth-poverty and human rights is not just another book, but a manifesto for our time, a script that urgently needs to be heeded and performed by a growing critical mass..... This book speaks to us in a powerful global voice that brings this global truth to life for our time..... I hope this book inspires many others. If we all had a small part in bringing about a change in the lives of others than there may be a chance to have greater peace in the world"