

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## Amnesty International's agenda for justice and hope

(Cocoyoc, Mexico) At the close of its 26th International Council Meeting, Amnesty International leaders from more than 80 countries adopted a plan of action that seeks to *globalize justice* in response to the pressing problems in the world defining the scope of the organization's campaigning for the first decade of the 21st century.

"The world is changing rapidly and new threats to human rights are emerging, while some existing patterns are getting stronger -- Amnesty International must react and this strategic plan recognizes it," Irene Khan said.

"Globalizing justice means ensuring that people can have social justice as well as legal justice."

The organization's strategic plan until 2010, maps out how to respond to current and emerging human rights challenges.

Against the background of the news from Iraq of the murder of Sergio Vieira de Mello, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other colleagues, Amnesty International called for a strengthening of the human rights framework.

"The narrow approach to the security agenda driven by the USA is undermining the hard-worn gains made on human rights. It is reinforcing the privilege of the powerful over the poor and the marginalized, and ignoring the real sources of insecurity for most of the people in the world," Ms Khan said.

"A coalition of powerful states fought two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq purportedly to make the world -- their world -- safer. But real people feel more vulnerable than ever before."

"In the coming years, our aim will be not only to release prisoners of conscience but also prisoners of poverty, prisoners of prejudice and prisoners of powerlessness," Ms Khan stated.

Amnesty International will work to address issues like discrimination -- which is a cross-cutting problem that affects people on a basis of sex, race, religion and culture. The organization will also strengthen its work on economic, social and cultural rights, and impunity.

Violence against women is endemic. It is one of the most pervasive human rights abuses, as well as one of the most hidden and it cuts across all boundaries affecting women everywhere. Women and girls are the targets of human rights violations in armed conflicts, in their homes and in their communities.

"We will seek out and act against the violence to which women are subjected in the ordinary setting of their ordinary lives. We will campaign to bring human rights home to every woman," Ms Khan declared.

"Women's bodies are not battlefields, we will campaign against rape in war and in peace: on the frontline and in the bedroom."

Based on an analysis of the most pressing problems around the world, Amnesty International's blueprint will focus on addressing:

Discrimination -- this is a growing problem, be it intolerance based on religious, ethnic or increased discrimination arising from racial profiling in the quest for national security.

Impunity -- perpetrators of human rights violations are not systematically brought to justice, even after they leave power.

The right to physical and mental integrity -- torture and ill-treatment continue on a massive scale, as do unlawful state killings.

Armed conflict -- millions of people's lives continue to be affected by armed conflicts, in which respect for humanitarian law is decreasing.

Uprooted people -- the rights of refugees and migrants continue to be disregarded, perhaps more so as a result of the "war on terror".

Women and girls -- discrimination and violence against women and girls is endemic across the world.

Economic, social and cultural rights -- excluded and marginalized communities around the world are denied basic rights.

"Our effectiveness is born in empathy but we will now make it grow into powerful action," Ms Khan said as she explained that Amnesty International will conduct a process of internal reform to better equip itself to mobilize people to work on behalf of others.

The organization will strengthen the effectiveness of its campaigning, including to confront abuses by corporate actors, corporate entities and armed groups. By the end of the decade, Amnesty International will also seek to increase its membership base around the world in order to have a bigger impact, but more importantly it is looking to increase its contribution to the broader human rights movement, including by working more closely with other organizations and activists.

"Amnesty International is entering a new area of activism for the 21st century to allow us to deliver real change to the people who need it the most."

"Peoples' power is stronger than ever before and we will stand strong to make it work for the fulfilment of human rights for all," concluded Ms Khan.

"We will seek to have global impact through local action."

## **Background**

Amnesty International members around the world took part in a debate on how the organization should develop its work in response to world wide political, economic and social trends and the growing demands for human rights action in certain areas.

The ICM is the supreme governing body of Amnesty International. It decides on Amnesty International strategy, political, financial and organizational issues for the forthcoming years. The Council also elects the International Executive Committee (IEC), to act as the decision-making body of the movement between Council meetings, as well as other committees.

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