

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Commission on Human Rights, 60th Session (15 March - 23 April 2004)**

#### **Agenda item 9: Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world**

#### **ORAL STATEMENT BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

Delivered by Peter Splinter

Mr Chair,

At the close of the 59th session the UN Secretary-General reminded the Commission that its mission to promote and protect human rights was "more important than ever"; its "responsibility to act more urgent."

Amnesty International looks to the Commission to make a real difference in protecting human rights and ending violations. In some instances, this difference can be made through dialogue and cooperation. When, however, a government fails to demonstrate real commitment to respecting the human rights of persons under its jurisdiction, the Commission must be prepared to use its moral authority to unequivocally denounce gross and systematic violations of human rights. Failure to assert that authority in situations of such violations diminishes and reduces the moral authority of the Commission.

The Commission is currently seized of the human rights situation in more than 20 countries. Yet it fails to scrutinize the situation in many other countries marked by serious human rights violations, such as Algeria, Indonesia, Nepal, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, United States of America and Zimbabwe. The credibility of the Commission, and its membership, is severely damaged as a result.

Amnesty International is also seriously concerned about shortcomings in the implementation of the Commission's decisions. Frequently the Commission itself notes the failure of States to take action to implement the recommendations addressed to them by the Commission and its Special Procedures. This too diminishes the credibility and authority of the Commission. It is vital that the Commission finds ways to hold States accountable for failure to give effect to its decisions.

This Commission must address with greater commitment the need to reform its approach to promotion and protection of human rights. If the political will cannot be found to do that collectively, then each UN Member State must ask itself what it can do to improve the Commission, whether alone or with others, whether as a Member of the Commission or in casting its votes in elections to the Commission.

Mr. Chair,

Amnesty International wishes to highlight two country situations.

The human rights situation in Iraq continues to be of great concern. There is an urgent need to address past violations and bring perpetrators to justice in accordance with international human rights standards. It is crucial that the United Nations assist Iraq to establish a solid foundation for the respect of human rights. Amnesty International urges the Commission to continue to keep the human rights situation in Iraq under review and to give itself the means to effectively assist Iraq to ensure that respect for human rights is at the centre of its transition.

Nepal is currently experiencing the highest level of violence since the start of the armed conflict in 1996. Human rights violations by both sides include arbitrary arrests, "disappearances", extrajudicial executions, torture, rape, recruitment of children and hostage-taking. Amnesty International urges the Commission to establish a mandate to monitor the human rights situation and to support a long-term and adequately supported human rights presence in the country.

Thank you, Mr. Chair