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USA: President Obama's orders on interrogations and CIA – historic decisions

Amnesty International's Secretary General Irene Khan today said President Obama's Executive Orders on interrogations and the end of CIA's secret detention programme is an "historic decision" and "one of the major steps needed towards bringing the USA back in line with international human rights standards."

"The importance of President Obama's executive orders should not be underestimated," said Irene Khan.

"It means that the USA no longer authorizes individuals to be detained in secret sites, and tortured by techniques such as waterboarding."

Amnesty International retains concerns about some provisions of the Army Field Manual, which the organization considers are not compatible with the international prohibition for torture or other ill-treatment. Nevertheless, by making the CIA and other non-military personnel subject to it enforces greater protections for detainees than have existed to date and is a major shift from the previous Administration's authorization of torture and other ill-treatment and flagrant disregard for the USA's international obligations on the treatment of detainees.

Other issues that will also need to be addressed include the possibility of "short-term, transitory" detentions being conducted by the CIA or for it to use non-US controlled facilities for proxy detentions and interrogations.

"Today marks a landmark in the success of campaigning for human rights. After six years of abuse and suffering, action is being taken to correct the crimes committed by the US in its 'war on terror'," said Irene Khan.

"This must not be, however, the end of the story. All those responsible for approving and carrying out crimes such as torture, disappearances and arbitrary detention must be brought to justice, and an independent commission of inquiry into all aspects of the USA's detention and interrogation practices in the 'war on terror' must be established."

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