

AI Index: PRE 01/202/2008
28 July 2008

Amnesty International welcomes appointment of new UN human rights chief

Amnesty International today welcomed the UN Secretary-General's decision to appoint Judge Navenethem Pillay as the new UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The organization believes that Judge Pillay's legal career, activism in defending opponents of apartheid and her role as an international judge in the Rwanda Tribunal and the International Criminal Court will stand her in good stead when she assumes the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights.

"International human rights standards are increasingly under attack. As the UN's top human rights official, Judge Pillay will need to be a leader and champion for human rights everywhere," said Amnesty International.

"She must be a forceful, independent and fearless human rights advocate addressing violations wherever they occur -- and be willing to speak out regardless of the power or influence of the country concerned."

Amnesty International called on UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to support the High Commissioner for Human Rights in retaining the independence of her Office.

"The UN Secretary-General must be an advocate for human rights straight from the top and must give his full support to the High Commissioner and in preserving the independence of her office," said Amnesty International.

"The High Commissioner holds a position of leadership that can guide and inspire the United Nations and those working for human rights protection everywhere. Amnesty International looks forward to working closely with the new High Commissioner in addressing these complex challenges all over the world."