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Afghanistan: Independent justice system is the key to respect and protect human rights

Discussions on the reconstruction of Afghanistan must focus on rebuilding a strong and independent justice system as the central key to effectively protect human rights in Afghanistan, Amnesty International said today ahead of the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance of Afghanistan in Tokyo next week.

"While efforts from the international community to rebuild the country's physical infrastructure should be further increased, the establishment of government institutions is equally vital for the development of the country and for the respect for rule of law in Afghanistan," the organization continued.

Essential for the establishment of an effective criminal justice system are an independent judiciary, a professional civilian police force, and adequate detention facilities that abide to international standards. International assistance will be critical in providing both financial resources and technical expertise to quickly and effectively establish these institutions in Afghanistan.

"Under former regimes, the judiciary, police and the prison system were responsible for severe human rights violations. The organization is urging the international community and the Afghan interim government to recognize that there must be a clear break with the past in which a climate of impunity persisted".

"Rehabilitation and recovery will only be achieved in a climate where the rule of law is respected. This requires a culture that respects

human rights and the creation of a fair and independent judiciary," Amnesty International said.

In order to build a future for Afghanistan based on justice and the rule of law, responsibility for past abuses must be addressed. Appropriate technical and financial support should be provided to allow full and impartial investigations of serious human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law to be conducted.

Please read the open letter from Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International, to participants in the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan at <http://www.web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/ASA110022002?OpenDocument>

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