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## **The first International Human Rights Day of the 21st century Global Coalition for Human Rights -- a must**

*Jalozai Afghan refugee camp (Peshawar, Pakistan) -- As the world marks Human Rights Day, amidst global turmoil, world leaders beating the drum of war, and human rights abuses, Amnesty International is calling on the global human rights movement to stand up for justice and human dignity.*

*During their visit to Peshawar and Afghan refugee camps, the Amnesty International delegation met victims who suffered repression at the hands of the factions who held or sought power, mothers in despair, children who never had the chance to go to school, human rights defenders sustained by hope despite the uncertainties of the new developments in the country, Afghan women more determined than ever to contribute to the building of a new Afghanistan.*

*In a relocation centre, Zubaida told the Amnesty International delegation that she is desperately waiting to return to Kabul to study science; Shahjoul described to the delegation her ordeal in the camp since she fled Kanduz with her four children one year ago; Rothan, from Narin, fled the country with her handicapped daughter and three other children after the taliban forces took her husband away.*

*On the first human rights day of the century, refugees are still fleeing in fear from Afghanistan; families are mourning their loved ones in the Occupied Territories and Israel; refugees and asylum seekers are turned away in Europe, Australia and many other parts of the world; children are being recruited to fight adults' wars in Africa; human rights defenders are under threat in Latin America and elsewhere; and the*

United Nations is shamefully silent as Parliaments undo human rights provisions.

"We cannot stand by as politicians erode hard-won human rights provisions in the name of security. Human Rights foster security, and any attack on human rights is an attack on human security," the Secretary General of Amnesty International added.

"We need to turn the debate about security and human rights on its head -- human rights are not an obstacle to security, they are actually the key to it," emphasized Irene Khan.

The tragic events of 11 September and the campaign against "terrorism" have been used to justify increased repression in some countries. By feeding on people's fear, governments are encouraging a climate in which xenophobia and racism can flourish. People have been attacked for being what they are, Muslims or Arabs or Asians. Racist attacks increased in recent months not only in the USA, Canada, and Western Europe, but also in Asia and Africa.

"We must struggle not only against torture, arbitrary detention and unfair trials, but also against discrimination, poverty and illiteracy. Festering social injustices will drive the oppressed, the voiceless, to despair and the cycle of violence is likely to continue," Irene Khan warned.

"What the Afghan men and women told the Amnesty International delegation about their struggle is echoed by millions around the world as globalization brings growing wealth for some and destitution and despair for others."

*"Today, on International Human Rights Day, let us pledge ourselves to build a global coalition for human rights. Let us join together in securing a peaceful future for the world's children," Irene Khan said.*

[\*More information on Human Rights Day\*](#)

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