

International Council Meeting: Together we will rise to new challenges

Hundreds of Amnesty International's representatives from around the world will be gathering in Dakar, Senegal, this week to debate the challenges facing the human rights movement at the beginning of the new millennium.

By holding its International Council Meeting (ICM) in Senegal, Amnesty International is paying tribute to the contribution made by the African human rights movement and African human rights defenders to the protection and promotion of human rights for all. Amnesty International's African sections and members, along with other African activists, work tirelessly, sometimes at risk to their own lives, to free the unjustly imprisoned, protect those at risk of torture and to obtain justice for victims.

"This dream of justice has brought together human rights activists from all cultural backgrounds, origins and walks of life. Our cultural diversity is the source of our strength, inspiration, and determination to defend the indivisibility of human rights," said Colm O Cuanachain, the Chair Amnesty International's International Executive Committee (IEC).

"Amnesty International has come a long way since its birth in a London lawyer's office in 1961. This year, the first of the new century and the 40th anniversary of the organization, is an opportune moment to look to the recent past in order to prepare for the challenges ahead," added the chair of the IEC.

In the coming days, hundreds of human rights activists will be discussing new ways of taking action and voicing their concern about a number of issues, including their concerns for people who have been murdered, tortured, raped, subjected daily to racial discrimination and otherwise abused simply because of their identity, and for victims whose economic, social and cultural rights are abused.

" We need to find new ways of building international solidarity, to continue to transform despair into hope and compassion into action," Colm O Cuanachain added.

At its ICM, Amnesty International will discuss areas of work that the organization wishes to develop or strengthen, including:

- Campaigning to combat identity-based human rights violations, particularly discrimination against women and children among other groups;*
- Developing action on economic, social and cultural rights;*
- Campaigning to bring to justice the perpetrators of human rights;*
- Making Amnesty International more effective by strengthening grassroots activism, diversifying campaigns techniques, improving evaluation, accountability and fundraising.*

"We have to strengthen our work not only for people who are targeted because of what they think, but also for those who are at risk because of who they are. We must renew our efforts to assert the universality and indivisibility of all human rights and together as a global movement for human rights, rise to the challenges which lie ahead," said Colm O Cuanachain.

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