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EU: Make human rights the anchor of the Middle East peace process *Amnesty International's Secretary General appeals to EU Leaders*

(Brussels, 11 December) Any peace initiative for the Middle East needs a strong human rights component says Amnesty International as EU Foreign Ministers meet in Brussels.

In a letter to EU Foreign Ministers (available at www.amnesty-eu.org) the human rights organization urged that EU and Member States' proposals for the Middle East address the need to respect human rights in the region.

"A cease-fire alone, without respect for human rights, will not bring lasting peace," said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU Office.

"The EU has a very important role to play in the resolution of the Middle East conflict. It should not hesitate to use all its weight to ensure that basic rights are safeguarded in its own as well as any other initiatives that receive the support of the conflicting parties" added Oosting.

Amnesty International's Secretary General is currently in the Middle East. In an Open Letter to EU leaders ahead of the European Council on 14 and 15 December (available www.amnesty-eu.org) Irene Khan asked for human rights measures "to build confidence and hope among the people in a political process to establish peace".

"We see a downward spiral of human rights abuses and entrenched impunity, sowing the seeds of a disaster with catastrophic consequences for ordinary people," said Khan.

Amnesty International asks that the EU exerts its political influence to ensure that any peace initiative includes the following key elements:

- o Effective international human rights monitoring across Israel and the Occupied Territories;
- o Accountability of both parties, in compliance with their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law;
- o Fulfillment of the Occupying Power's obligation to provide for the protection and welfare of the Palestinian population;
- o Immediate cessation of the sale or transfer of weapons to all conflicting parties;
- o A peace process that includes concrete provisions addressing fundamental human rights issues at the heart of the conflict.

For further comment/background and interviews:

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