

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Media Briefing

AI Index: IOR 30/005/2002 (Public)  
News Service No: 104  
21 June 2002

## **G8 Summit: Amnesty International's concerns and recommendations**

The meeting of the G8 (the world's seven wealthiest nations, plus Russia, and Spain as representative of the EU) will be held in Canada on 26-27 June 2002. The G8 Summit agenda will include international security and the 'war on terrorism', the state of the world economy and African economic development. Amnesty International has urgent human rights concerns in each of these areas.

### **No Security Without Human Rights**

Amnesty International, and civil society around the world, has been deeply concerned that public discourse since the atrocities of September 11th has generally positioned security and human rights as contradictory and incompatible concepts. Human rights are not an obstacle to security and prosperity. Human security comes only with human rights and the rule of law. Human rights are the basis for creating strong and accountable states, without which there can be no political stability or economic and social progress. The challenge to states therefore is not security versus human rights, but rather to ensure respect for the full range of human rights.

However, in every corner of the globe, security is being pursued at the expense of human rights. In the past six months Amnesty International has documented the extent to which new "counter-terrorism" laws, policies and other measures which have been adopted by numerous governments violate and undermine fundamental human rights. We have reported the worrying trend, again worldwide, of governments using the rhetoric of "terrorism" as an excuse to mask repression, often targeting minority ethnic and religious groups. We have also expressed concern that "counter-terrorism" committees, working groups and other bodies, at national, regional and international levels, rarely include human rights experts or even seek human rights advice as part of their deliberations and decision-making.

### **Effective Control of the Arms and Security Trade**

Amnesty International will be appealing to the G8 leaders to help prevent military, security and police (MSP) transfers between G8 countries and African states where those transfers contribute to human rights violations. The next issue of Amnesty International's broadsheet, the *Terror Trade Times*, will be launched just before the summit on 24 June. It examines ways in which the military and security trade of seven of the G8 states (the USA, Russian Federation, France, the UK, Germany, Italy and Canada) is leading to the violation of basic human rights, particularly in Africa, thereby undermining the prospects of social and economic development.

All states have a fundamental legal obligation to assess whether the arms and security equipment

and training they transfer are likely to be used by the recipients to commit human rights abuses and to ensure that through such transfers they are not knowingly assisting in such abuses. Arms transfers are not lawful just because the recipients are government agents or the transfers have been authorized by government officials. They can only be lawful if they are made in accordance with international standards. (Existing international legal principles and standards have been codified into a Framework Convention on International Arms Transfers proposed to states by a group of Nobel Peace Laureates, including Amnesty International - See the back cover page of the latest issue of the *Terror Trade Times*, enclosed). The failure of governments to fulfil this obligation is contributing to the destruction of millions of lives, particularly in Africa.

In July 2001, the UN convened the International Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects, which aimed to agree a UN Program of Action, containing recommendations to governments. In the lead-up, Amnesty International and other NGOs pressed states to ensure that the Program of Action reflected four key principles.

- *TRANSPARENCY*

this includes the need to establish a UN register and regional registers, documenting all international transfers small arms and light weapons; comprehensive annual reports at national level (coupled with effective parliamentary scrutiny); and an adequate and reliable means of marking arms so that they can be traced and tracked.

- *CLOSING GLARING LOOPHOLES*

these arise through practices such as international arms brokering and transporting via "third countries" to circumvent existing national laws and the export by arms manufacturers of "licensed production" operations, making it easy to proliferate arms.

- *ACCOUNTABILITY*

the adoption of an international agreement with rigorous criteria for arms transfers based upon existing international law would help set common standards, and this would require a mechanism for oversight and review - currently only the European Union has such an agreement, the 1998 EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, and it is "politically binding".

- *INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE*

internationally-funded aid and training projects to assist countries affected by gun violence and armed conflict, for example, in collecting and destroying unlawful small arms and in the establishment of fully accountable and well-trained police and customs.

Unfortunately, the UN Conference in 2001 was a relative failure. Predictions that it would be undermined by some key arms exporting states, including two of the G8, the United States and Russia, proved to be well-founded. The final UN Programme of Action only focuses on the need for states to implement UN arms embargoes, mark and trace weapons, store them safely, help customs officials and Interpol, and destroy surpluses, especially in the context of peace-building and demobilization. However, the UN Programme excludes any mention of "human rights violations", "war crimes" or "misuse of arms". It fails to elaborate binding measures to ensure respect for international human rights standards and international humanitarian law by national arms export authorities. And it excludes any notion of parliamentary oversight and the need for annual public reports and end-use monitoring of the small arms trade.

Amnesty International believes that the G8 should put this issue high on this year's agenda and assert

long overdue leadership. The four principles outlined above could shape G8 action here - with a commitment to taking relevant steps nationally and an agreement to launch a coordinated effort to reinvigorate efforts at the international level. Above all else, G8 states must make a commitment, backed up by transparent mechanisms, not to authorize any transfer of arms to any country, be it direct or indirect, where there is a clear risk that these items will be used by the likely recipient to commit grave human rights abuses, war crimes or crimes against humanity.

### **The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD)**

The G8 must help promote concrete measures which recognise and work towards respect for human rights as a precondition of sustainable development in Africa. NEPAD is a proposal from African leaders, about Africa, for Africans. It firmly recognizes that the solutions for Africa are both about enhanced and improved international assistance and aid, but also real national level responsibility.

NEPAD highlights the importance of conflict prevention. Without question, conflict continues to be one of the continent's most pressing human rights concerns. Consider only the past decade - Rwanda, Angola, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Liberia, Sierra Leone - horrifying, devastating, conflicts, all marked by widespread human rights abuses which have, above all else, targeted civilians, including children. The result: hundreds, and hundreds of thousands killed, widespread torture including rape, maiming and other brutal violence, and massive displacement, be it within national borders as internally displaced persons or to neighbouring countries as refugees.

G8 aid and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) should be based on:

- agreement with the architects of NEPAD of a set of detailed proposals to meet the principles and commitments to human rights outlined in section A1 of NEPAD, which covers human rights, democracy and political governance initiatives;
- African governments should indicate further steps to the implementation of the human rights remit of the "heads of state implementation committee" in terms of the Peace and Security Initiative and the Democracy and Political Governance Initiative in section A1 of NEPAD;
- transparent, public and workable measures which put human rights at the centre of reporting monitoring and review processes aiming at putting an end to impunity;
- efforts to prevent violent conflict and state failure that consistently include specific measures to promote human security in accordance with human rights and specifically promote professional, accountable policing, in line with human rights standards
- companies which support and work towards the fulfilment of the human rights elements of NEPAD.

There are clearly a number of other critical areas where decisive and meaningful G8 action is of utmost importance to make NEPAD and other international development programs a success:

- relevant institution-building, such as national-level human rights commissions
- human rights training for police and security forces
- greater international support for refugee protection in Africa
- ongoing attention to child soldiers, still a pressing problem in many African states (many African, and G8, states have yet to ratify the relevant international instrument, the Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child)
- initiatives that would provide greater protection to Africa's many courageous front-line human rights defenders.

Certainly in all of these cases, as with the four areas of concern to be addressed in greater detail here, it

is vital that the particular plight and needs of women, children, minorities, and other vulnerable groups be given focused attention. The ultimate goal must be to deliver policies and programs which are truly responsive to the needs of the African peoples.

### **Misuse of Natural Resources**

There is now conclusive evidence that the diamond, timber, oil and coltan trade is a significant source of funds that enable armed groups and governments, often in poor parts of the world, to purchase large amounts of expensive weaponry that is used to commit serious human rights abuses.

Although some 35 countries involved in the diamonds trade began the so-called "Kimberley process" to establish an international certification system that track diamonds through all the stages of the trade, Amnesty International is, however, concerned that the process is severely flawed because it contains only weak, voluntary measures for independent monitoring and verification of the certification system.

Amnesty International and other human rights groups are urging this year's G8 summit to include mandatory and periodic monitoring, and to consider adding similar measures for other extractive industries which appear to fund arms purchases, fuel violent conflicts and contribute to human rights violations.

### **Recommendations**

In conclusion, Amnesty International is appealing to the leaders of the G8:

to act consistently in terms of international law to control arms transfers, especially to countries experiencing gross human rights abuses;

with regard to international aid and support given to Africa, to prioritise the combatting of illicit arms transfers, the promotion of professional, accountable policing, and the establishment of effective mechanisms to protect human rights;

not to provide financial support or advocate business activities of companies domiciled in the jurisdiction of the G8 which act in ways that harm human rights in the African countries in which they operate;

to include these commitments in their final joint communique and in individual government statements before the Summit.

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Public Document

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