

Norway: Presidency of the Security Council presents an opportunity for human rights

(Oslo) The international community is looking to Norway to adopt human rights as its central policy platform during its Presidency of the United Nations Security Council, Amnesty International said as its Secretary General, Irene Khan, visited Oslo.

"Norway is in a unique position to play an important role in strengthening the human rights dimension of the Security Council's consultations and resolutions. This is especially important at a time when many countries have adopted security and "anti-terrorism" measures that infringe upon human rights and discriminate against ethnic and other minorities," the organization added.

The Security Council is well placed to address human rights since human rights violations constitute one of the root causes of conflicts and threats to peace and security.

The organization used the opportunity of Ms Khan meeting the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs to raise various issues regarding that country's presidency, including:

Protection of civilians in armed conflict

Norway is assisting the Security Council in drafting an aide memoire, requested by the Council, to help it identify how the protection of civilians should be addressed in establishing, changing or closing peace keeping mandates.

Amnesty International called on Norway to ensure that the aide memoire on the protection of civilians contains the highest standards and measures to protect civilians in armed conflict situations, including refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and children. Specific attention should be paid to providing a framework for the protection of human rights of and effective humanitarian access to civilians caught up in armed conflict and to the use of children in armed conflict.

Israel / Palestinian Authority / Occupied Territories

Given Norway's prominent role in attempts to resolve the conflict in the Middle East, Amnesty International called on the Government of Norway to support any initiatives in the Security Council leading to an end to human rights abuses committed by all sides in the conflict and to ensure the establishment of a strong, public human rights monitoring presence in the Occupied Territories.

Afghanistan

During Norway's Presidency, the mandate of the new UN presence in Afghanistan will be adopted, at a time when the security situation remains unstable and the Afghanistan Interim

Administration requires substantial international support. Amnesty International called on Norway to ensure that the new UN presence in Afghanistan places human rights central to its mission, that human rights are given a high profile and are effectively integrated in all aspects of the UN mission.

The organization welcomed the emphasis placed by Norway on ensuring that women will play an integral part in the UN's programmes. Amnesty International calls on Norway to take the lead in ensuring that the Security Council pays effective attention to the protection of the rights of women and minorities.

The organization also called on Norway to ensure that sufficient numbers of human rights monitors are deployed and that any further agreements exclude the possibility of impunity for the perpetrators of serious violators of human rights and humanitarian law.

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