

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EU OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: IOR 61/008/2006
News Service No:
23 February 2006

EMBARGO: 09.00 GMT (10.00 BRUSSELS TIME) ON THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2006

DON'T TURN A BLIND EYE TO UK HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

(Brussels, 23 February 2006) On the day that the European Parliament conducts formal hearings on suspected Member States complicity in CIA abuses, Amnesty International releases a report showing how the United Kingdom has been carrying out a sustained attack on universal human rights standards, well beyond the issue of rendition flights, through its draconian counter terrorism practices.

The new report, "*United Kingdom - Human Rights: A broken promise*", (available at www.amnesty-eu.org) describes in detail how a country's fight against terrorism has generated a Kafkaesque system of laws and practices which violates basic human rights law and has resulted in serious abuses.

Alleged terrorism suspects were detained indefinitely without charges, mostly on the basis of secret intelligence that they could not refute. The harsh conditions of this internment, which in some cases lasted for three and a half years, has traumatised these men and their families. Although they were released without charges, some have been re-arrested and now face deportation to countries where they risk being tortured.

Throughout this, the role of courts and judges has been severely compromised by legislation that curtails judicial powers.

Faced with Amnesty International's comprehensive negative assessment, the human rights organization has challenged the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament not to remain silent. In an [open letter](#) addressed to these institutions, the human rights organization urges the EU to take an urgent stand against the excesses of Member State's counter-terrorism policies.

Amnesty International considers that the EU cannot continue to hide behind an alleged "lack of competence" to confront its Member States.

"If the EU is serious in addressing the CIA allegations, it cannot simultaneously ignore the abuses committed by Member States while fighting terrorism. By staying silent, the EU is allowing the UK to set dangerous precedents for other Member States", says Dick Oosting, director of Amnesty International's EU Office.

"National courts are struggling to prevent dangerous initiatives while the EU turns a blind eye", said Oosting.

Amnesty urges the Commission and the Council to take a crucial first step in addressing the issue of torture, at home and abroad. The EU must take a firm position against "diplomatic assurances". This highly controversial practice, endorsed by the UK, undermines international law and goes against the absolute prohibition of torture.

For further comment/background and interviews:

Amnesty International EU Office (Brussels)

Tel: +32-2-5021499

Fax: +32-2-5025686

Email: AmnestyIntl@aieu.be

Web-site: <http://www.amnesty-eu.org>