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EU-UKRAINE SUMMIT: RAISE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFICIENCIES

(Brussels, 14 September) Torture, racism and violence against women are key human rights problems in Ukraine which Amnesty International (AI) urges the EU to raise at today's Summit.

"Along with energy and other "strategic" interests, we expect that the EU will not shy away from raising fundamental human rights issues that affect the lives of Ukrainians and foreigners and should play a key role in any deepening of relations between Ukraine and the EU", said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU Office.

Despite recent positive measures non-governmental organizations continue to receive allegations of torture at the hands of law enforcement officers which are rarely investigated. AI is also troubled by the forced return of asylum seekers to countries where they are likely to face torture and ill-treatment, such as in the case of ten Uzbek asylum seekers, last year.

The rise of extremist groups and racist attacks is another factor of concern that has been tragically highlighted by the murder of an Iraqi asylum seeker in June. Increasing violence against foreigners should be recognized and combatted with more determination by the government.

While Amnesty International recognizes that the Ukrainian authorities have approved some measures to combat domestic violence, this problem remains widespread. The human rights organization recommends the creation of shelters for victims and a major national public awareness campaign to promote zero tolerance of violence against women.

"Acknowledging that gender inequality and domestic violence are also problems present in EU member states, we hope the EU can exchange experiences on best practices and offer assistance to the Ukrainian authorities, in a constructive spirit", said Dick Oosting.

For more information see letter at www.amnesty-eu.org

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