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League of Arab States must press for international monitoring in Occupied Palestinian Territories and strong peacekeeping force in Sudan

On the eve of the meeting of the League of Arab States in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on 28 March 2007, Amnesty International issued a call to the League to take a strong human rights stand on problems facing the Middle East and North Africa.

Pointing to continuing gross and widespread human rights abuses in Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Sudan, the organization said the League and its member states must help address these situations and should no longer subordinate human rights to political considerations. There can be no solution to the intractable problems facing the region without a recognition of the fundamental importance of the human rights of each individual, in every country, the organization said.

In particular, Amnesty International calls on the League of Arab States:

Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories

To support the establishment and deployment by the UN of an effective international human rights monitoring mechanism across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories with a mandate to monitor compliance by each party with its obligations under international law. Such a mechanism should report publicly and identify concrete measures to be taken by the respective parties, other states and international organizations to ensure adherence to international human rights and humanitarian law.

To ensure that any effort towards restarting peace negotiations ensures the fundamental human rights of all parties to the conflict, including the right to life of all Palestinians and Israelis, the right to movement by the dismantling of the fence/wall within the West Bank, the ending of arbitrary restrictions on movement, the removal of Israeli settlements from the Occupied Palestinian Territories and, in the longer term, a fair solution to the refugee question.

Sudan

To ensure that the Sudanese government accepts without further delay the establishment and deployment of an effective United Nations and African Union peacekeeping force with sufficient resources and a strong mandate to protect civilians by all necessary means, in full compliance with international humanitarian law.

To urge the government of Sudan to disarm the Janjawid in accordance with international agreements signed by Sudan and to prevent cross-border attacks against civilians in Chad by the Janjawid.

Iraq

To ensure that the Iraqi government takes effective steps to protect the civilian population in Iraq and to exert all possible pressure and influence on the parties to the conflict in Iraq, including armed political groups opposed to the Iraqi government, to cease killings of civilians, hostage-taking and other gross abuses of human rights. League of Arab State members should also provide protection to Iraqi refugees.

Somalia

To ensure a strong human rights mandate for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the proposed subsequent UN peacekeeping operation.

Lebanon

To encourage the Lebanese government to address in a human rights framework unresolved issues that are fuelling grievances and instability in Lebanon, in particular by tackling the issue of impunity for suspected perpetrators of human rights violations -- including during the 1975-90 civil war -- and undertaking a comprehensive reform of the national justice system.

Palestinian Authority

To make clear to the national unity government that it must take concrete steps to end impunity and the lawlessness and political faction-fighting that continue to claim lives, especially in the Gaza Strip.