

Dimitrij Rupel
President of the Council Ministers of the European Union

Brussels, 21 April 2008
Ref: B769

Dear Mr. Rupel,

Subject: EU human rights policy towards Uzbekistan

In light of the upcoming General Affairs and External Relations Council on 28-29 April 2008, Amnesty International would like to share its concerns about EU policy towards Uzbekistan.

The EU should maintain a clear, consistent and assertive human rights policy towards Uzbekistan. This includes at its core the call for an independent international investigation into the Andizhan events of May 2005. Amnesty International welcomed the two rounds of expert talks that took place in December 2006 and April 2007 in Uzbekistan. However, we hold the view that such an initiative cannot substitute an independent international investigation. The expert talks did not meet the international standards for an effective, independent and impartial investigation, including the UN Principles on the effective prevention and investigation of extra-legal arbitrary and summary executions.

The call for an investigation was at the centre of the EU's decision to establish targeted sanctions on Uzbekistan in October 2005. Amnesty International was therefore highly concerned that no specific reference to this investigation was made in the October 2007 decision taken by the Council to part-suspend the sanctions. We are also concerned that the EU may once again part-suspend the sanctions whilst there has been no commitment from Uzbekistan to allow an investigation.

The EU would send out the wrong signal not only to Uzbekistan, but also to the Central Asian region and other partners if it withdrew its call for such an investigation, while the core concerns remain unaddressed. This would seriously damage the consistency and coherence of EU human rights policy.

The Council decision of October 2007 also set up additional benchmarks to evaluate human rights progress made by Uzbekistan. There is further information on the general human rights situation in Uzbekistan in the attached briefing, which demonstrates the severe limitations of any progress that has been made towards meeting these additional benchmarks.

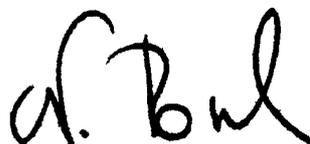
Amnesty International remains at your disposal to discuss this issue further.

Yours sincerely,



Natalia Alonso

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Nataša Posel

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Attached: Uzbekistan - a briefing on current human rights concerns