

Brussels, 16 December 2008
Ref.B839

Dear President of the European Parliament,
Dear Presidents of the Political Groups,

Subject: Now is not the time to be silent on Guantanamo and CIA renditions

Amnesty International is disappointed to learn that the Conference of Presidents refused to table two oral questions on Guantanamo and CIA renditions for debate in plenary this week. This sends a disturbing signal that these issues are not a priority for the European Parliament (EP). Amnesty International believes that a public debate is more than ever necessary to press EU institutions to act to close Guantanamo and shed full light on European complicity in CIA illegal practices.

One question was addressed to the Council asking about the moves undertaken to help the US administration close Guantanamo. In particular, it asked about Council activity on the possibility of offering international protection within EU territory to Guantanamo detainees who cannot be returned to their countries of origin because they would face torture or other ill-treatment upon return.

The decision not to discuss the issue in plenary appears to be wholly inconsistent with the EP's own calls for the closure of Guantanamo. The decision by the Conference of Presidents is also particularly untimely considering that the same day, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Portuguese Foreign Minister made a public call for the EU to take up this issue "as a matter of principle and coherence". By avoiding debate, the EP is both shying away from taking up its responsibilities and missing important political opportunities.

Regarding the decision not to table the question on CIA renditions, the inconsistency is just as striking considering the work of the TDIP committee and the fact that, after two years, its recommendations have still not been acted on by the EU institutions. The fact that new evidence has emerged since the EP report, including recent revelations that Spain knowingly allowed its territory to be used to transport captured terrorist suspects to Guantanamo adds to our concern that the EP is not holding other EU institutions to account for gross human rights violations committed with EU Member States' participation.

Amnesty International calls on the European Parliament to clarify its position and to reassume much needed leadership in the debate.

Yours sincerely,



Nicolas Berger
Director
Amnesty International EU Office