

Brussels, 28 May, 2008

Dear Mr Barroso,

It is with pleasure that I present to you herewith the Amnesty International Report 2008. Published in the year of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), it documents human rights abuses occurring in 150 countries and territories around the world. Regrettably, the European Union (EU) is by no means free of such problems and with 26 of its member states included in this year's report, it has no reason for complacency.

According to Amnesty International's report, in 2007 there was a pattern of discrimination in at least 16 EU countries, mostly on grounds of gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. In as many member states individuals continued to suffer police brutality and ill-treatment while in custody. A breach of rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees was also identified in at least 18 member states and, as in the previous year, counter terrorism policies continued to be a source of human rights violations in at least 15 EU countries.

On this last point it is important to stress that EU member States have still not condemned or fully investigated evidence of collusion with the US-led renditions and secret detention programme. To date there are still no assurances that renditions have stopped. EU governments and institutions ought to apologise for their inaction, namely the failure to disclose the full truth of European complicity in renditions. This would be a milestone towards a full and independent investigation, as well as the introduction of measures to ensure that this will not happen again.

While Europe remains a magnet for those seeking to escape persecution, violence or poverty, it still fails to sufficiently protect people in dire need because of its repressive approaches to irregular migration. Such approaches undermine the fundamental rights of migrants and impact severely on those of refugees and asylum seekers.

The lack of collective political will to address key human rights abuses at home, seriously limits the EU's credibility to promote human rights in its external relations, where it is also not doing enough. The EU has not used its leverage sufficiently in the run up to the Beijing Olympics to make a real impact on the human rights situation in China. By significantly downgrading the input of civil society in the human rights dialogue it diluted its principled approach to one of pure tactical politics. The same is true in the case of Uzbekistan where the EU suspended sanctions, ignoring the very question that made it impose them in the first place – the call for an independent investigation into the Andizhan killings.

The EU and the upcoming French Presidency must show the same courage and leadership in making a fresh commitment to human rights as we saw in 1948 when world leaders adopted the UDHR. An initial but crucial step would be to adopt, by the Declaration's anniversary in December, a Council resolution launching an overall review of its human rights policies and mechanisms, with the aim of finally designing and implementing a coherent human rights policy for the EU.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicolas Beger,  
Director, Amnesty International EU Office