

President of the European Commission

José Manuel Barroso
Berlaymont Building
1049-Brussels

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

Brussels, 7 September

Our Ref: B1346

Dear President Barroso,

THE STATE OF THE UNION'S HUMAN RIGHTS

In the coming days, you will be issuing an important message to the people of Europe about their future through your 'State of the Union' address. Amnesty International calls on you as President of the Commission, to give due prominence in this address to human rights both within the EU and abroad.

The economic crisis, and how the EU and its member states have chosen to address it, poses a clear and unambiguous risk to the rights of people in Europe. Poverty, xenophobia and intolerance are on the rise. There is a need now more than ever for a strengthening of human rights protection within the EU. The EU has failed to produce a comprehensive internal human rights policy, and the EU human rights architecture which emerged from the Lisbon Treaty remains unimplemented, leaving existing gaps in human rights protection in the EU untouched. This summer over 11,000 people from across Europe signed our petition calling on the EU to put human rights back on its internal agenda in the context of the consultation on the 2013 EU Citizenship Report.

We strongly welcome the adoption of the new EU human rights package for external relations on 25 June. The main challenge now lies in the implementation of the package by all relevant actors. The new Strategic Framework clearly states that "the EU will place human rights at the centre of its relations with all third countries including its strategic partners".

We call on you in your State of the Union address to confirm the Commission's commitment to human rights at home and abroad by;

- Providing a date for the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and confirming the EU's "genuine partnership" with civil society through public consultation on the EU-level discussions on the accession and on the development of the inherent domestic rules
- Outlining how the Commission's ambition to effectively implement and make the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights a reality for everyone in the EU will be realised
- Reaffirming the Commission's intention to truly mainstream human rights effectively and ensure that human rights protection and promotion is at the core of its external action - including trade, energy, and migration, security and development policies and that the EU will strengthen its resolve to address human rights violations caused by European companies abroad
- Stating how the Commission will provide leadership by efficiently monitoring the application of anti-discrimination law, reacting more firmly to infringements, and finally closing gaps in the safety net by enhancing the EU's anti-discrimination standards
- Confirming that the Commission's promise to produce a strategy on violence against women, which includes female genital mutilation (FGM), as part of its Strategy for Gender Equality between women and men 2010-15 will be honoured and appear in the Commission's Work Programme 2013; and importantly ensuring that the EU adheres to the Council of Europe Convention on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicolas J Beger
Director