

Dr. Luís Filipe Marques Amado
President of the
Council of Ministers of the European Union

Brussels, 11 September 2007
Our ref. B697

Dear Dr. Amado,

Subject : Human Rights Concerns to be addressed at the EU-Ukraine summit

Amnesty International would like to seize the opportunity of the forthcoming EU-Ukraine summit to be held in Kiev on 14 September to draw to your attention some key human rights concerns, which we hope you will be able to raise with the Ukrainian authorities during your deliberations. Ukraine is a party to all major relevant international conventions, under which it is required to protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of all persons in its territory and subject to its jurisdiction without discrimination, including on the grounds of sex and race.

1. Torture

Despite some positive measures being taken in order to prevent torture and ill-treatment, non-governmental organisations continue to receive allegations of torture at the hands of law-enforcement officers. Amnesty International is particularly concerned over the continuation in the use of confessions as evidence, the impunity of law enforcement officers guilty of torture, the failure of the General Prosecutor's Office to conduct adequate investigations into allegations of torture and the failure to protect complainants and witnesses from reprisals. We are also troubled by the return of people to countries where they are likely to be subjected to torture or ill-treatment such as in the case of the Uzbek asylum seekers in 2006.

2. Racism

In April 2007, in a letter to the Prosecutor General, the security service chief, and the interior minister, President Viktor Yushchenko asked that measures be taken to arrest and punish anybody defacing Jewish and other memorial sites, and he noted the rise of extremist groups in Ukraine. In June, following the murder of an Iraqi asylum seeker in Kiev, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees expressed concern at a press briefing in Geneva that racist attacks against asylum seekers, refugees and other foreigners were increasing. The motives for the murder of the Iraqi asylum seeker are not clear and a police investigation is under way.

In this light, Amnesty International remains concerned over the discrimination and abuse of persons on grounds of race and the rise of extremist activity in Ukraine, and calls on the government to recognise the serious nature of racism in Ukraine and to take measures to combat it.

3. Domestic violence against women

While Amnesty International recognises that the Ukrainian government has approved some measures designed to combat domestic violence, the problem remains widespread and more steps must be taken in order to secure women's rights to equality, life, liberty and security and freedom from discrimination.

Amnesty International calls on the Ukrainian government to commit to improving the protection of women victims of domestic violence and to raise public awareness with regard to violence against women. We recommend that the government of Ukraine must promptly allocate secure, long-term government funding or actively seek donor funding, to ensure that shelters, specifically for women exposed to domestic violence, are set up in every region of the country in collaboration with NGOs experienced in working to protect women from violence, with subsequent running costs assigned to local government. The shelters must be available to all women without regard to their place of residence, or citizenship.

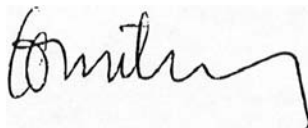
The government of Ukraine should immediately pass the new draft Law on the Prevention of Violence in the Family which already incorporates some of the recommendations made in Amnesty International's briefing paper. See Domestic Violence- Blaming the Victim (AI Index: EUR 50/005/2006 21 November 2006)

Furthermore, the government of Ukraine must fund and implement a national public awareness campaign to address the underlying social and cultural attitudes that discriminate against women. The campaign should: promote zero tolerance of violence against women, remove the stigma from women victims of violence, and encourage victims to seek redress. The campaign should include community leaders, municipal politicians, the media and civil society and educational establishments.

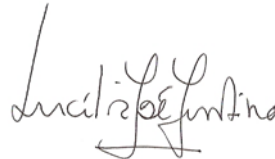
It is important to address the Ukrainian authorities on the seriousness of these fundamental rights deficiencies and the need to take urgent steps to tackle them. In raising these matters the EU should of course acknowledge that gender inequality and violence against women are problems that are also structurally present in EU member states. This should provide ample opportunity to exchange experience and offer assistance based on best practices in terms of regulation, policy and practice, in a constructive and mutually reinforcing spirit.

We hope that this will enable you to raise these key human rights issues with the Ukrainian authorities and we look forward to hearing from you as to the outcome of your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,



Dick Oosting
Director,
Amnesty International EU Office



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