

Dimitrij Rupel
President of the Council of the European Union

Brussels, June 11 2008
Our ref: B783

Dear Mr Rupel,

Subject: EU-Israel Association Council, 16 June 2008

Amnesty International understands that an upgrading of relations between the EU and Israel is due to be discussed at the upcoming Association Council, on 16 June 2008.

We are highly concerned that the current level of engagement between the EU and Israel on human rights issues is deficient. Therefore, it is essential that any upgrading of relations in other spheres is accompanied by an upgrading of the human rights dimension. Any declaration from the EU on the occasion of the Association Council should reflect the importance that the EU gives to the human rights dimension of all of its external relations.

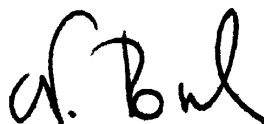
In particular, it is clear that the current informal working group, which exists between the European Commission and the Israeli authorities, is insufficient. As a first step, this should be strengthened to create a full subcommittee, as foreseen under the European Neighbourhood Policy, with more time and resources, the ability to examine individual cases in detail and the full involvement of the Council. Effective engagement between the EU and Israel on human rights issues should send a strong positive signal to other Southern Mediterranean neighbours and strategic partners, and should no longer be used as an excuse for others to limit their own engagement.

In this context, it is also essential that human rights issues are not only dealt with in the framework of technical meetings, but that the Association Council itself looks at human rights concerns, as stipulated in the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Dialogues. We urge you to consider that the human rights situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories raises serious concerns and putting human rights on the agenda at all levels is not a technicality. To assist with this task, please find attached a briefing on the current human rights situation.

Yours sincerely,



Nicolas Beger
Director
Amnesty International EU Office



Nataša Posel
Director
Amnesty International Slovenia

Attached: *'Human rights concerns in Israel/ Occupied Palestinian Territories:
Briefing Paper ahead of the EU-Israel Association Council, 16 June 2008'*