

Members of the LIBE Committee
European Parliament

13 March, 2009, Brussels
Ref: B846

Dear Members of the LIBE Committee,

Subject: Vote of LIBE Committee on the draft Report on the proposal for a new anti – discrimination directive

On 16 March the LIBE Committee will vote on the draft Report on the Proposal for a Council directive on Implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment Between Persons Irrespective of Religion or Belief, Disability, Age or Sexual Orientation Beyond the Workspace 2008/0140(CNS) of Rapporteur Ms Kathalijne Buitenweg.

The persistence of widespread social prejudice continues to result in large-scale discrimination in both private and public sectors, especially in access to housing, goods and services. Amnesty International welcomes the directive proposal as a first and necessary step in order to fill an important gap in the current existing EU legal framework. It will increase the level of protection against discrimination throughout the European Union and combat discrimination not only based on race or gender, but also on religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. This would put into effect the principle of equal treatment beyond the field of employment.

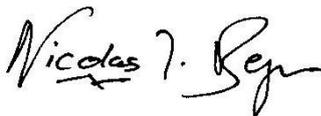
The current draft Report supports the main objective of the proposal to ensure legal protection on these grounds, and to raise them to the same level of protection from discrimination on the basis of sex, race or ethnic origin, already covered by European Law. The draft Report strengthens the scope of the proposal and it is crucial to appreciate that respect for competences of member states does not detriment the principle of equality for all. Furthermore, the draft clarifies some relevant points including multiple discrimination, a concept that requires specific analysis in order to be tackled effectively.

Amnesty International believes that all people deserve protection from discrimination and therefore welcomes this report as an important step forward in ensuring effective equality for all in Europe.

Amnesty International wishes to urge you, as a member of the LIBE Committee, to support the draft Report during the vote on 16 March, because it underpins the importance of protection from discrimination and equal treatment on all grounds and in all areas.

Amnesty International believes that the European Parliament has a key role in order to promote and defend human rights inside the European Union, which is based upon the principle that equality of opportunity is a fundamental right for all individuals and that all forms of discrimination must be combated with equal resolution.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Nicolas Beger
Director
Amnesty International EU Office