

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EU PRESS RELEASE**

### **AI AND JUSTICE CHALLENGE JHA COUNCIL TO LIVE UP TO PROMISES**

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(Brussels, 27 April 2006) Implement a comprehensive system of procedural safeguards for fair trial, say Amnesty International and the UK law reform organization, JUSTICE, on the eve of the EU's Justice and Home Affairs Council.

Years have passed since the EU first promised a framework decision on basic guarantees such as the right to a lawyer and interpretation for those facing criminal procedures throughout the European Union.

Although the proposal was presented in 2004 and has been discussed since, there are no concrete prospects for adopting it. While the issue is now back on the agenda, Member States are expected to do no more than "take note" of the current state of the negotiations. Our organizations believe that without a strong political signal from the Council, the project remains at risk.

"Taking note of progress is just not good enough", says Dick Oosting, director of Amnesty International's EU Office. "After several failures to reach agreement and meet self imposed deadlines, the Council should be worried about delivering on its promises".

"There cannot be an 'Area of Freedom, Security and Justice' without a guarantee for the most basic rights of defendants at EU level", adds Roger Smith, director of JUSTICE.

Amnesty International and JUSTICE acknowledge that the Council is divided but stress that failure will send the wrong political message to European citizens and neighbours and solidify the current one-sided approach to judicial cooperation, including the fight against terrorism.

In a joint letter, the human rights organizations appealed to Member States to reach an understanding speedily.

Amnesty International and JUSTICE again call on the Council to address the need to balance security measures with the respect for individual rights.

**For further comment/background and interviews:**

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