

Press release (also in Arabic on the website below)

Amnesty International European Office

EU respond to migrants abuse in Morocco

9/01/2007 9:37:39

(Brussels, 9 January) Amnesty International strongly urges the European Commission to review its cooperation with Morocco to combat irregular migration after a series of violent raids where hundreds of people - including women, minors, refugees and asylum seekers - were rounded up and forcibly displaced to the border with Algeria.

The organization is very concerned with the fate of around one-hundred people unaccounted for as a result of these raids occurred on 23, 25 and 29 December.

Moroccan authorities deny that persons with UNHCR documentation were displaced but Amnesty International has credible information that at least ten refugees and sixty asylum seekers were sent to the border. Some of these have meanwhile been allowed to return to Rabat. Several complained of theft and sexual abuse by security force personnel in both Algeria and Morocco.

The EU cannot remain indifferent to these actions especially since the Moroccan government is justifying them as a response to EU requests for cooperation in combating illegal migration, invoking the recent Rabat Conference of July 2006 between African and European governments and the European Commission.

“This abuse of migrants, reminiscent of what we saw in Ceuta and Melilla in 2005 and 2006 is not acceptable” said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International’s EU office.

"It confirms our fears that minimum human rights standards are not being applied in the management of migration, contrary to EU obligations” he added.

For further comment/background and interviews:

Amnesty International EU Office (Brussels)

Tel: +32-2-5482773

Fax: +32-2-5025686

E-mail: AmnestyIntl@aieu.be

Web-site: <http://www.amnesty-eu.org>