



Frau Dr. Kristina Schröder
Bundesministerin für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend
11018 Berlin

CC: Sra. Dña. Bibiana Aído
Spanish Minister for Equality
Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Brussels, 22 February 2010

**Subject: Amnesty International Directors from all EU sections are calling for your support to the EU
Anti-discrimination Directive**

Dear Ms Kristina Schröder,

Ahead of your meeting with your Spanish counterpart on 24 February, we, Directors from 21 sections and the EU Office of Amnesty International in Europe, have decided to collectively express Amnesty International's concern over Germany's continued opposition to the new comprehensive EU anti-discrimination legislation.

In a meeting with Mrs Welskop-Deffaa on 5 February, representatives from anti-discrimination organisations from all over Europe explained how in other European states, people are currently discriminated on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation without access to remedies at national level.

Amnesty International has welcomed the Commission proposal for a new Equality Directive as a first and necessary step to redress this situation and to close the legal gap created after the Directives of the year 2000. A comprehensive EU legal framework which ensures the same protection and remedies on all Article 19 TFEU grounds will be critical to achieve equal and effective protection for all across the EU. It will finally provide the same protection to all individuals in a wide range of sectors where discrimination is persistent, such as access to goods and services, housing, health or education on an equal footing whatever the discrimination ground.

Amnesty International believes that of all EU member states, Germany is well placed to know how EU anti-discrimination standards have already served to promote national anti-discrimination legislation. As a result, Germany is today well renowned for its Equality laws.

Germany is also a country that consistently proclaims its attachment to the fight for equality for all.

By officially opposing the Commission proposal for this new EU anti-discrimination Directive, Germany is not only blocking the negotiations on the Directive in the Council, it is also allowing other EU member states to hide behind its position to justify the slow progress of the Council discussions. Most of all, Germany is sending a devastating message that no EU action is needed to fight discrimination that persists in Europe way beyond the field of employment on the grounds of sexual orientation, religion or belief, age or disability. In effect it accepts that EU partners deny protection to millions of other EU citizens.

At a time where:

- There are serious concerns on the conformity of Lithuania's legislation on the protection of minors from detrimental public information and the right to be free from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation;
- The EU has made a historical move to become party to the UN **Convention** on the Rights of Persons with **Disabilities**;

- The Euro-barometer survey indicates an increase in discrimination based on age;

- Some are tempted to seek example from the Swiss referendum to ban minarets to marginalise further the religious freedom of the Muslim communities in our societies,

EU inaction is harmful and potentially damaging to the protection of universal human rights.

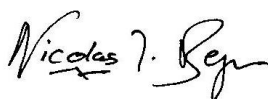
Such a message also suggests to the rest of the world and to accession countries in particular, that existing EU anti-discrimination standards are enough, in fact leaving numerous forms of discrimination unaddressed by the EU *acquis*.

If Germany continues to oppose the directive, people risk being left without access to legal protection against discrimination for years to come.

Amnesty International is determined to mobilise across Europe to hold Germany into account for blocking action at EU level. In the name of all the European Directors below, Amnesty International calls on Germany:

- to halt opposing the Commission proposal for new comprehensive and meaningful anti-discrimination legislation at EU level and,
- to use all its influence and experience in fighting discrimination to support EU and national efforts to promote effective equality for all in all areas of life.

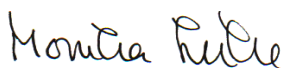
Yours sincerely,



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