

José Manuel Barroso  
President of the European Commission

9 April 2008, Brussels  
Ref: B765

Dear Mr Barroso,

**Subject: New legislative proposal on anti-discrimination**

Amnesty International welcomed earlier commitments by the Commission and the Council to work on new legislation that would extend protection against racial discrimination to cover all the other grounds listed in article 13 of the EC Treaty (TEC) – namely to address discrimination based on sex, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, in and outside the labour market. We believe this is an important step forward for the fight against all forms of discrimination in Europe, in line with EU and member states' obligations under international and European human rights law.

Amnesty International is therefore very concerned by recent indications that the Commission intends to put forward a proposal that will not cover all grounds of discrimination listed in Article 13 TEC.

Sixty years ago the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted recognising the principle that human rights are universal and indivisible. Despite major improvements of international and national legal frameworks, discrimination remains one of the most serious and pervasive human rights abuses in Europe today. Millions of people are still subject to exclusion, poverty, ill treatment and violence because of who they are, what they are presumed to be or what they believe.

At EU level, the Equality and Race Directives were remarkable achievements at their time. Eight years later, the EU must not miss this opportunity to build on this legacy and adopt a comprehensive human rights instrument.

By limiting the scope of its proposal, the EU would endorse a fragmented approach to human rights that is not consistent with its obligations under European and international law. Furthermore, it is only by recognising all forms of discrimination that the EU will be able to fulfil both objectives of tackling multiple forms of discrimination and preventing discrimination in all areas of daily lives, including in access to education, housing and health.

Amnesty International calls on the Commission to honour its commitments to bring equality for all in all areas of life and to come forward with a comprehensive new legal instrument to cover all grounds of discrimination. We are also calling on all EU member states' governments to support such a comprehensive approach.

We thank you for your attention and remain at your disposal to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,



Natalia Alonso  
*Deputy Director  
Amnesty International EU Office*

Cc College of Commissioners