

## MENA

In the Middle East, I think what has been remarkable again has been the growth of human rights activists, the growth of civil society of people speaking up, standing up for human rights.

I think in the Middle East the biggest issue remains and has remained for many years now is of course the Israeli/Palestinian conflict that continues to take a very heavy human toll. Certainly over the last year, we have seen the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, the entire population held hostage; imprisoned while their conditions had got worse and worse.

Iraq is also another country where the conflict continues to take a very heavy toll on civilians and ordinary people's lives. And we have also seen in the Middle East a securitization of the law in the sense that the war on terror, extremist violence has been used as an excuse to clamp down even further on civil liberties.

My message is to the leaders of the Middle East but also to world leaders. This is a region where there are two very serious conflicts, the conflict inside Iraq and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict both of which have implications far beyond their borders, very serious political implications and catastrophic human rights consequences that we see every day. Action needs to be taken, the political process has to be re-opened in the case of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and in the context of Iraq, very serious attention has to be given about how to end the human rights abuses, the action by arm groups, but also the impunity that prevails. It requires engagement by the international community to find solutions.