MS. IRENE KHAN: Friends, it's a great honour to deliver this visiting lecture in human rights at the University of Alberta, and it's really a great privilege to do so in the footsteps of such distinguished human rights activists as Desmond Tutu, Louise Arbour, and Shirin Ebadi.

And it's a particular pleasure to do it in a country which has such a long and strong tradition of supporting human rights at home and abroad. It was in Newfoundland in August 1941, as you know, that Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt issued the Atlantic Charter, which is widely known and felt to be the first step towards a worldwide commitment to human rights. And Canada then, of course, as you also know, went on to play a vital role in drafting the U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and many distinguished Canadians have contributed to developing those human rights further.

Through its laws, policies, and practices within Canada as well, this country has sought to uphold at home what it has promoted abroad, and the enactment of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has had a major impact on the promotion and protection of human rights here.

Today at lunch I was sitting next to a lawyer who works
in Edmonton, and he mentioned to me how he felt the attitudes of people have been changed by the Charter. A sense of human rights coming close to them has become much stronger through that Charter.

But, of course, there have been times in the past, and there are issues even now, where Canada could and should do better at home and abroad. I would hardly be Secretary General of Amnesty International if I didn't say that.

The title of my lecture this evening is *Security and Human Rights, There is No Choice to be Made*. And in the next half hour or so, I would like to do three things:

First, I would like to analyze the threat to human rights that a narrowly-focused -- what I believe to be a narrowly-focused security agenda poses and explain why and how that agenda, far from making the world a safer place, is actually making it more dangerous.

And secondly, I would like to make a case for a paradigm shift which puts respect for human rights at the center of the security agenda and not in contradiction to it.

And thirdly, I would like to call upon the Government of Canada to take some concrete steps and play a more proactive role on key human rights issues.

And finally, I would like to encourage Canadians to stand up and speak out, as loudly and as strongly as you can, because the very framework of human rights, international law, and multilateralism that this country has worked to build over so many years is now under pressure as never before.
Garbed in the language of law, human rights sometimes seem very remote, a set of lofty ideals far removed from the reality of everyday life. Sometimes they seem like rules that are only comprehensible to lawyers. Yet those who crafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights understood the potential that human rights hold for changing the lives of ordinary people.

Some of you will, of course, know Eleanor Roosevelt's famous words, and I quote her:

"Where ... do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home -- so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere."

So let me begin by telling you about such a place and about such people in a remote part of Sudan.

Last year, last September to be exact, I led an Amnesty International delegation to western Darfur. Driving through that open countryside, I saw village after village destroyed or abandoned. In one abandoned village we found a few broken pots lying and a child's shoe as a poignant reminder of the panic in which people fled just before the militia attacked. Where huts once stood, I saw camels grazing. I heard men tell
me they were afraid to leave the refugee camps for fear of being killed, and I heard women telling me that they sent young girls out to collect firewood because young girls are nimble and they could run faster if the militia, the Janjaweed militia, came.

And then I heard from one young girl, a girl of 16, the tragic story of how she didn't manage to run fast enough, and she was attacked, caught by the Janjaweed and gang raped. And the worst of her ordeal was still to come. She was pregnant from the rape, and she was terrified that when her family found out they would abandon her. Rape is a terrible stigma in a conservative Muslim society, and that is precisely why the Janjaweed militia have used rape as a weapon of war, secure in the knowledge that they will never be prosecuted and punished.

Just outside El Geneina, the main town in western Darfur, we came across a camp for displaced persons. Actually, to call it a camp would be to give it a dignity it doesn't deserve, because it was nothing more than a cluster of people under some blue plastic sheeting in the midst of dumps of garbage and some donkeys standing around. And we had to pass through a roadblock to get to that little settlement, and it was a roadblock set up by men in Sudanese army uniforms; but I was told by others who knew better than me that these were actually Janjaweed who worked very closely with the Sudanese army. And as you can imagine, we didn't stop to ask them too many questions.

Now, inside the camp I sat on the sand and I listened to
the stories of the women, and what I remember most strongly was the story of a middle-aged woman called Zainab. And she told me that her village had been attacked on the ground by the Janjaweed militia and bombed from the air by the Sudanese air force. And so many people were killed, so many men were killed, that there were none left to bury the dead, and she and other women buried seven dead. And when they were too tired to dig anymore, they put the bodies under a shelter, waiting for the next day. And that night the Janjaweed came, and they burned the bodies. Zainab kept repeating two words in Arabic, and I turned to the interpreter and I asked what is she saying. And he said she is saying hunger and thirst. Hunger and thirst, because that is all that she could think of as she walked for 60 days from the ruined village to the camp where she was where I met her. Zainab has lost everyone and everything, except her grandchildren. She is terrified even to go out of the camp and too scared, of course, to return home.

Now, the relationship between security and human rights is not just an abstract construct for Zainab. It is a question of life and death. But for you and me, luckily, things are different. There are no Janjaweed militia roaming the streets of Edmonton, and there is no risk that I will find my home burned or destroyed when I return to England this weekend.

But we too live in a dangerous world, a world which is increasingly interdependent, globalizing risks as well as opportunities. Today even the rich and powerful among us are as vulnerable as the poorest and the marginalized, and we are
vulnerable to a range of threats, from terrorist attacks to a flu pandemic.

Now, I was in London on the 7th of July when the suicide bombers struck, and I must admit I was afraid, and it's only through pure chance that I wasn't on one of the trains or the bus that were blown up. And like every Londoner, I know that the bombs will come again, will explode again, and I don't know if I will be lucky the next time around.

That kind of fear has left an indelible mark in the first five years of this millennium.

From Manhattan to Madrid, from Bali in Indonesia to Baghdad and Basra in Iraq, office workers, commuters, policemen, holiday makers, school children, ordinary people have become targets of a senseless violence that they did not provoke and can do nothing to prevent.

And I just want to make it very clear that indiscriminate and brutal use of political violence by armed groups against innocent bystanders is a grave abuse of human rights. Amnesty International has unequivocally and strongly condemned all such attacks. Governments have a duty to protect people from such attacks. But governments also have a duty to uphold and respect human rights.

Governments talk about the balance between security and human rights, but these are not two different sets of obligations that you balance one against the other. They are complementary, and they are interdependent.

The Universal Declaration recognizes that freedom,
justice, and peace depend on there being respect for human rights.

As you know, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was crafted in 1948, just after the end of the World War II, and those who drafted it were acutely aware that the disregard and contempt for human rights led to barbarous acts. And so what the declaration tries to do is to give us the message that it is through human rights that security will be assured.

But unfortunately, government practices over the decades have not necessarily reflected that same vision of the Universal Declaration, and there is nothing new about this debate between human rights and security. And of course it's usually someone else's human rights and our security.

We heard it in Eastern Europe, you will remember, during the communist regime, during the cold war, and we heard it in Latin America in the 1980s, and in many autocratic and dictatorial regimes around the world before and since.

Dissidents are tortured, minorities are persecuted, political opponents are attacked in many countries around the world, all in the name of preserving national security. Remember the military attacks in Iraq. They were supposed to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction and make it much safer for all of us. But instead, of course, thousands of Iraqi civilians have died, and both Iraq and the world are less safe than ever before.

So there is nothing new about this argument by governments, that it is necessary sometimes to give up a little bit of our
liberty in order to gain a bit more security. What is, however, new is that western governments and the public in democratic societies are buying into that argument.

"Let no one be in any doubt; the rules of the game are changing." That is what Tony Blair, the British prime minister said, in August this year when he unveiled a draconian set of proposals in the aftermath of the bomb attacks in London: proposals that curtail civil liberties, that allow the deportation of foreigners, that increase the police powers.

But have the rules of the game really changed, or is there a game being played with the rules? If human rights are just rules that can be set aside, that can be bent, what will be the consequences for us, as well as people like Zainab?

Now, that question, I believe, is important for our own sake, as well as Zainab's, because it is critical to the values we hold dear, to the kind of society in which we want to live and the kind of society in which we want to bring up our children.

Human rights embody common values of human decency, dignity, equality and justice. As such, they are the basis of our common security, and their erosion hurts that fundamental foundation of our security.

Human rights are based on universal standards and legally-binding treaties. If we ignore them, we undermine international commitment and cooperation to find global solutions to global problems. And today's world is full of those kinds of problems that need those kinds of solutions.
Human rights are protected and promoted by the international community of states through the United Nations and international institutions, like International Criminal Court. If we sideline them, we weaken the institutional framework for collective security.

And yet, in the name of creating more security, we see governments doing precisely that, flouting international law with impunity and turning their backs on multilateralism.

We see it happening in the way in which so many governments have adopted tough laws to enhance security post 9/11. And many of these measures are sensible and necessary, but many others have clearly overstepped the bounds of international law. Despite the impact that they have on civil liberties, many of them have been rushed through with very little time for public scrutiny or debate, or even parliamentary discussion. For instance, the Canadian antiterrorism Act was adopted in only nine weeks, and the U.S. Patriot Act and the U.K. counter legislation in even less than that.

In the aftermath of 9/11, almost every country in the world, from A to Z, has expanded its power to investigate, arrest and detain. What is common to most such laws are vague definitions of new offences, sweeping powers to hold people without charge or trial, often on the basis of secret evidence, measures which effectively deny or restrict access to asylum and speed up deportations.

If we take the case of the U.K., prior to 9/11 it already had one of the toughest antiterrorist laws because of the
threat of the IRA. It rushed through legislation in November of 2001, and under that legislation it could detain people without charge or trial on the basis of secret evidence indefinitely. Foreigners, not British citizens. And it used that provision actually to detain around 9 -- or 15, I think, 15 or 16 people at the height of it, including former torture victims, most of them refugees who could not be sent back to their country without facing persecution. This law was challenged in the British courts and set aside because it was discriminatory.

But following the attacks this summer, the government is seeking again to introduce new legislation, this time to hold people for up to 90 days pending investigation. That's the equivalent of a 6-month custodial sentence.

And they are also introducing a new crime called glorifying terrorism. I can just imagine policemen rubbing their hands with glee and judges scratching their heads, wondering what on earth is that.

In Canada, I'm sure some of you know, non-citizens can be arrested, detained and deported under a system called security certificates issued by the government.

Well, you know that someone in the U.K. recently heckled Jack Straw, the foreign secretary, while he was lecturing on Iraq and was thrown out of the audience under the Antiterrorism Act. (LAUGHTER)

So to come back to Canada, at the present time there are four individuals in detention in Toronto and Ottawa. Now,
these detainees do not have to be informed of the precise allegations against them. They see only a summary of the evidence, and evidence may be presented in court in their absence or in the absence of their counsel, and the detainee does not have a right to examine any or all of the witnesses. And the federal court can only look at the reasonableness of the decision, not the substance of it.

Now, in Amnesty International's view, we believe that that kind of a process is actually violating a number of provisions on fair trial. And when you take that into account, together with the position that the Canadian government has always taken, that it can deport people that it believes are a risk to national security, can deport them to countries where they are likely to face torture, you can imagine the risk the individual faces.

And the U.S. administration has detained hundreds of people without charge or trial on its territories. It has held its own citizens as enemy combatants, and it continues to detain people in Guantanamo in contravention of the Geneva Conventions. And despite a U.S. Supreme Court decision in June 2004 that these people in Guantanamo have a right to have their cases heard in U.S. courts, not one single case has yet reached the U.S. courts. That was in June 2004. And that's because of the obstructionist tactics that the U.S. administration is using, including simple things like not allowing people access to meet their lawyers and putting obstacles in the way. And Guantanamo, of course, is just the
tip of the iceberg.

And what we are finding through our research is that there seems to be a shadowy system somewhere out there where people are being held. We don't know who is holding them. We don't know how many are being held. We don't even know who is being held. And we only come across these cases after people have been released. And one U.S. official -- and they are not necessarily all being held by U.S. authorities. They are being held by different governments in Africa, in Asia, in the Middle East, sometimes handed over by western governments sometimes being tough on their own. And a U.S. official, giving testimony in front of the U.S. Congress, described them as ghost detainees. In Latin America in the 1980s, similar practices were called disappearances.

And of course you know the case of one Canadian citizen who became a victim of a similar kind of practice, was returned to Syria where he was tortured and ill-treated. And that's called extraordinary rendition.

So we are getting this lexicon of human rights abuse coming up, extraordinary rendition, ghost detainees. Torture has become stress and duress.

Now, such erosion of human rights cannot make the world safer because it's actually sending a chilling message to many of the governments that human rights can be ignored with impunity. And countries like Russia, Colombia, China and Egypt, they are using the argument of antiterrorism to justify killing of civilians, in the case Colombia and Russia,
attacking minorities. China has done that, locking up dissidents. Egypt has done that. And they justify it all as their struggle against terrorism, and instead these human rights abuses are actually feeding grievances, leading to more violence and not less.

And then the other very dangerous development has been the downward slide -- moral slide, I would say, not just an erosion of human rights -- towards torture and ill-treatment, opening up the absolute ban on torture. And of course none of us will ever forget those awful pictures from Abu Ghraib.

But Amnesty International's research suggests that there is a thread running from Abu Ghraib through Guantanamo and Bagram and beyond. Because that is not the end of the story. There has not been full accountability of what actually happened in Abu Ghraib and why.

And again, slowly but surely, we see some governments following suit.

Ironically, in the same week that Saddam Hussein was brought to trial, the British government opened negotiations with Libya, Jordan, and Algeria to return people to those countries. And the reason why they were negotiating the return is because it was quite clear that these people faced a risk of being tortured on return, and the British government was trying to get what it called diplomatic assurances from them. Now, would you trust a piece of paper from these governments? So you can imagine those who were going there, how they felt about it.
And there is right now a case in the House of Lords, a case in which Amnesty has submitted an advisory opinion, and the case is whether the government can rely on evidence obtained by torture. Not torture committed by its own officials, but torture committed by foreign government officials on foreign soil.

And of course our position is that no, the obligation, the international obligation against torture does not only -- is not only to prevent a government from not committing it, it's also to prevent the encouragement of torture by others.

And it's ironic that when that hearing opened in the House of Lords about ten days ago, we were sitting in the same place in Westminster where in 1772 torture had been banned as being contrary to common law principles of justice.

Have the rules changed to such an extent that we are now ready to undo 250 years of legal precedent?

Playing games with such a fundamental rule must not be allowed, and that is why I am pleased that the Canadian government has opened a public inquiry into the case of the Canadian citizen who was deported from the U.S. to Syria.

There are other Canadians who have brought similar allegations, and these allegations are about whether or not Canadian officials were involved somehow in the torture. Similar concerns have arisen about three other Canadian citizens.

And just last week, Canada was being examined by the U.N. Human Rights Committee. Canada's record was being examined.
The committee wanted Canada to explain why it is not doing more to get to the bottom of what really happened, because Canada has not opened investigations into the other three cases.

So in addition to spreading more human rights abuse, the slide of torture, one other thing that has happened, I think, post 9/11, the war on terror followed by the war on Iraq has actually created a deep sense of injustice and alienation among and between communities. Discord, division and discrimination are leading to an environment in which we now see more racism and xenophobia and increasing polarization between communities.

And this has actually strengthened the hands of the fundamentalists, those who have already been afraid of the power of human rights, and the space for liberal dissent and tolerance is shrinking in many societies as hardliners take over from both ends of the spectrum. And civil society is not quite so civil in many countries as the voices of dissent, minorities, activists, women are being muzzled, and sometimes quite violently. And I am deeply afraid that the war on terror has actually reinforced the backlash against women's human rights.

Take women in Afghanistan, where much was made of the Taliban's treatment of them. But the international community too has miserably failed to make life more secure for them. And there is a serious risk that in Iraq too we might see a backlash against women's human rights.

I visited Afghanistan in July 2003 and one of the things
I did there was to visit the women's prison in Kabul. This prison was -- the people that I met, there were about 150 women or so, and almost all of them were in prison because they were trying to run away from brutal husbands. They wanted to marry the man of their choice. You know, hardly crimes -- or they were accused of committing adultery. Hardly crimes in this part of the world.

And I met there a young girl of 16, Jamala. She was 16 at that time. A year before when I met her, when she was 15, she told me that she had been abducted from her home by someone who wanted to marry her, and she refused to marry him. But she said her hands and feet were bound during the marriage ceremony and she was forced to go through it. She was then taken to his home, abused by him, raped, maltreated for a number of months, until she couldn't bear it any longer and then she ran away. The police picked her up, brought her back to that house again. She was, of course, treated even worse. She ran away again, and this time the police brought her back -- put her into the prison. And it was for her own safety, they said. And she said to me that all she wanted to do was go home to her parents, but she feared that if she did that her father would kill her because she had tainted his honour. And if he didn't kill her, certainly the people who had abducted her would. So there she was stuck in prison for God knows how long at the age of 16.

And her fears are not totally unfounded because just a few months before that the president had actually given amnesty
to 20 similar women, similar kinds of histories, and one of them was killed right away by her family. And several others have disappeared, and Amnesty International has not been able to find out what happened to them.

And that’s the kind of situation in which now we have to deal with -- we have to make the argument for human rights.

And there is growing cynicism among people in that part of the world about the double standards of human rights, that human rights are a convenient tool of foreign policy, of western governments, but that when the going gets tough in the West, human rights are ditched very easily. Very difficult to push the human rights in places like Sudan, Afghanistan now because what hope is there for Zainab’s human rights when we are so ready to give up our own at the first hint of trouble in our own neighbourhood.

But possibly what is most disturbing now is that a narrowly focused security agenda has actually put the interests of the powerful and the privileged over the poor and the marginalized. And I say that because it has overlooked the real sources of insecurity that most people have to confront every day in their lives.

The real sources of insecurity for many people lie in corrupt justice systems, inept oppressive governments, unemployment and homelessness, in the failure to halt the proliferation of small arms, extreme poverty, preventable diseases, spread of HIV/aids, family violence.

Let's face it, for many people HIV/aids is probably more
life-threatening than the possibility of a suicide bomber. And yesterday I was in Banff at the International Conference on Family Violence, and for most women, it seemed to me listening to the speakers there, the likelihood of being battered at home is much higher than being killed in a terrorist attack.

Now, by saying this, I don't mean in any way to downplay the real threat of terrorism in the world today. But what I want to do is to put it into perspective, so that we can build a more balanced response to it. And I am afraid that if we don't bring some perspective on the issue, the world is not only going to be more insecure, but also more unfair.

In an age of unprecedented economic growth, a billion people are still living on less than a dollar a day, nearly two thirds of them in Africa and Asia. And a quarter in Asia -- sorry, two thirds in Asia and a quarter in Africa.

And today I was told that at a time of unprecedented affluence in Alberta, 20% of the population live below the poverty line, many of them aboriginal.

Over half the population of Africa do not have access to basic life-saving drugs at a time when the rest of us are preparing to stockpile Tamiflu. Can we seriously believe that we can hold back killer viruses in a globalized age in that way? Can we truly believe that we will make the world safer for a privileged few while the vast majority live in misery?

The world stands at a human rights crossroad. On the one side, there are these issues of insecurity, and on the other
side there are human rights standards and values.

Now, that is the way in which I think it is -- the argument is being presented, but I think it's a false presentation. There is no choice of one or the other because there cannot be a trade-off between human rights and security that would lead to a viable or sustainable solution in the end. There is no way forward, except to strengthen our security and fight terrorism through respect of all human rights for all.

And that is why we must not lower our standards. People have the right to be secure from violence, and governments have the right, duty, responsibility to ensure that security. But governments cannot respond to terror with terror.

Of course those who commit cruel acts must be brought to justice. But it is essential that this should be done with respect for international standards of human rights and for their human rights, because if we are not prepared to stand up for the rights of the guilty, we will not be able to protect the innocent.

And that is why I think today global insecurity, far from diminishing the value of human rights, has actually made it even more important, because there can't be any real lasting security without respect for human rights and the rule of law.

And I said earlier that the world of human rights was standing at a crossroad. Canada is also at a crossroad, I would say. Canada has to rise to the challenge that the world is presenting. Canada cannot rest on her past laurels. Canada has made tremendous contributions to the human rights
framework in the past, and it must now put human rights again in centre place on its own domestic and foreign policy agenda.

And here I have a few suggestions. First I think Canada must begin with the rights of the indigenous people. Amnesty International, as many of you know, has spoken out very loudly about the levels of violence and discrimination that indigenous women face in Canada. Last year I was in Ottawa to launch Amnesty's report, Stolen Sisters, which documented the injustices to native women. They publicly acknowledged that this was a problem and more needed to be done, and they have provided some additional resources, but those resources are not enough. And what needs really badly to be done is to put in place a consistent approach across the country. Policing and social services vary enormously, and that needs to be straightened through a standard approach of services and level of protection that indigenous women can expect and deserve across the country, wherever they happen to be.

Canada must also enhance the international efforts to make human rights a daily reality for people abroad, and Canada must reject the idea that human rights are an obstacle to security at home and abroad. And that will mean tackling some of the issues that I have spoken already about Canada's own antiterrorism laws. The Canadian government must, for example, stop the efforts to deport people when they are considered to be security threats to countries where they could face torture. This simply sends the wrong message, and it is actually contrary to international law.
And the government must institute an independent process to find out what role Canadian officials actually played in the return of Canadian citizens to countries where they have been ill-treated.

And Canada's system of security certificates obviously should also be reviewed. Unless Canada is willing and ready to put its own house in order, it won't be in a position to promote this strong approach to human rights abroad. And Canada does need to champion the human rights very strongly abroad, particularly at this moment, because there is a process of reform going on in the United Nations. It's an important process, but it is a fragile process. Here we need Canada's creativity, Canada's determination, Canada's energy to shepherd that process, because in the past Canada has actually shown its ability to bring about consensus on very important initiatives, like the land mines campaign, for example. And the time has now come again for Canada to use those same skills to reform the human rights machinery.

And I would also say Canada should demonstrate true commitment to human security. And I say that because, of course, this is the country which championed this concept of responsibility to protect, a concept of international responsibility in the face of mass human rights abuse, which could amount even to military intervention to save people's lives.

Having pushed that concept of human security, Canada is actually leaving a big loophole in its own approach to security,
and that is its approach to the arms trade. Canada, I discovered to my surprise, is actually apparently a major producer and trader of small arms and light weapons.

Did you know that small weapons are the real weapons of mass destruction? More than half a million people die every year because of small arms. And this morning I heard on the radio the story of a young woman in Edmonton who was a victim of gun violence here.

And I have seen the impact of small arms on children, child soldiers in Africa. Children are recruited to be soldiers because the weapons are light enough for them to carry. And in rehabilitation centres, I met a boy who must have been not more than 12 in that rehabilitation centre who told me how he had become a child soldier and all the awful things that he had done, too awful to mention to you here. And eventually he left when he saw one of his comrades die and he realized what death was. This was a child of 12.

In that same -- in a medical centre next to that rehabilitation centre I met an 8-year-old boy, and this boy had been brutalized by child soldiers. They had cut his skin and thrown petrol on it, burned him. They had done such awful things to him that when I met him about three or four months after his traumatic experience, he still would not play with children. If he saw a child coming, he would run away because to this little boy of 8 other children were the biggest danger that he could imagine.

That's what happens to children because of the
proliferation of small arms.

Amnesty International has launched a campaign, together with Oxfam, that called for a treaty for the control of small arms for those who might abuse it, commit human rights abuses. And we have actually been able to get a number of governments to sign up to that initiative, and Canada is notably absent from that emerging coalition, despite its commitment to peace building and security initiatives in the U.N. And I hope very much that Canada will join that coalition.

Finally, I hope that Canada will champion a new approach to international development that puts economic and social rights at the centre of the development agenda because the rights to basic healthcare, to shelter, to education are just not privileges for the few, but fundamental rights of the many.

And so from what I have said so far, I hope you will understand my point of view, why I believe that global insecurity, far from making human rights less important, have actually increased their importance if we are to change -- turn the page and move on to a new chapter.

But let me finish just with one word -- not one word, several words. That it is not just the responsibility here of governments to uphold human rights. There is a very important role for society, for individuals. Amnesty International's underlying philosophy is that human rights abuses anywhere is the concern of people everywhere. And ordinary people can, through international solidarity, build a powerful network for human rights. And this is what we need
today.

Just as I was getting ready to come here, I came across a letter that a journalist, a Chilean journalist, had actually written to Amnesty a number of years ago. He had been tortured during the Pinochet regime, and his wife had disappeared. He was adopted by Amnesty as a prisoner of conscience, and after he was released he wrote a letter to us. In that letter he said, "When you are there, naked on a metal bed, and they are giving you electric shock torture and your wife is going to die and the child she is carrying is going to die, and the other person next to you is being killed, you wish there was an international community, a bigger humanity, somebody who will say that this has to stop, that this is useless. It corrupts everything. It corrupts life. It should not be possible".

And that's what we need today, that larger humanity that will stand up and say this must stop. And that larger humanity, I think, is global civil society. There is a huge community of human rights activists, defenders, social activists who are coming up, and we must join hands with them. And I hope that more and more Canadians will do so. Here in Alberta, in the middle of affluence, you are very far away from many human rights abuses that have taken place around the world. You do have a few human rights abuses on your own back yard, but by and large you do not suffer the same abuses that others are suffering or witnessing.

But I hope that the call for solidarity you will pick up, because that's something that is so badly needed. And the best
antidote to those who seek to erode human rights is actually our own voice, our own willingness to stand up.

And so as I look ahead, I'm actually inspired by the words of an Israeli peace activist who I met in 2002 when I went to Janin. This man had lost his 16-year-old daughter in a suicide bomb, and he said to me, "I could have made my grief a tool for revenge, but I decided to make it a platform for change." And he is the founder of a movement of bereaved families that bring together both Palestinians and Israelis who have lost family members.

So we live in a dangerous world. We could live with our fear, or we could turn it into defined courage. And that is what is so important. That choice is with us. And in a sense it is no choice, because I think we all know that at the end of the day, peace and security will only come through Justice And human rights.

Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

MR. DAVID PERCY: Well, I am delighted to say that we do have some time for questions. There are two microphones on the ground floor, one over there and one over there, and there's a further microphone in the balcony. So we invite questions. I would ask out of consideration for others that you keep your questions reasonably brief. So if anyone has a question, I invite you to approach the microphone.

>>: First of all, I would like to thank the speaker for a wonderful presentation. And I have been an Amnesty International member
for, I think, close to 25 years. But there are, I think, some important issues that need some really in-depth analysis.

For example, if a fundamental human right is the freedom of speech, at what point do you say that someone is using that freedom of speech to incite hatred? So at what point do we curb a basic human right to allow another basic human right?

The second issue -- and it comes up again and again -- is how do western governments deal with dictatorial regimes, ones that curb the human rights of their own citizens?

If we take Iraq as an example -- forget weapons of mass destruction. Let's say America really had gone in because they genuinely felt that Saddam Hussein was a threat to his own people, which he was. How do you deal with that? He has caused the deaths of close to a million people in the Iran/Iraq war. He is obviously, I think, someone who has committed horrendous crimes. How do you deal with that? It is not a simplistic answer. I don't think there is a simple answer to that. How would you handle those two issues?

MS. IRENE KHAN: Good.

Let me first start by saying that human rights were actually put together not by Amnesty International, but by governments. And so therefore they were acutely aware of the tough decisions that they have to make in governing a country, and that is why there are only very few human rights that are absolute. Most human rights have built into those treaties and provisions some limits to protect other's rights. So within freedom of expression, you will find some language that
allows hate speech not to be used.

And so there are -- there is within that system some checks and balances already there. So it is not as though governments have to dream up or not understand where those boundaries are between freedom of expression and hate speech.

But there are some absolute provisions, like the prohibition on torture, which is absolute. Not only not to commit torture, but not to allow others to commit it either. And there are no exceptions there. And what is interesting is that governments are not only putting restrictions on freedom of speech, but actually shifting to those very fundamental non-negotiable rights.

Now, you talked about Saddam Hussein and how do western governments deal with him? Well, who armed him? Who allowed him to continue repressing people? (APPLAUSE)

You know, in 1988 Amnesty International published the report about the killing of the Kurds by Saddam Hussein. And at that time the U.S. and the U.K. and their allies were the first to deny amnesty's report. As we all know, Mr. Rumsfeld actually met with Saddam Hussein in those days. There are some tough questions to be answered there. If you deal with dictators, then down the road, yes, you do create a problem. So that is why a preventive approach is a much better one. A more ethical foreign policy is actually in everyone's interests.

(APPLAUSE)
=: Can you hear me?

My question is related to the post conflict peace building. Amnesty has released several press releases on Somalia and Sudan, particularly SPLA and the Khartoum peace making efforts in Nairobi, but basically left -- while it focuses on Darfur and lord's resistance army and other, particularly Congo, have you bought into the argument that calling for strong human rights regime might upset the most complicated fragile atmosphere, and that's why you are not basically -- I mean, active in taking the research, basically when Americans were in Somalia?

That's my question.

MS. IRENE KHAN: Not at all. On the contrary. We see in Sudan a fundamental connection between what is happening in Darfur and the systemic problems that exist of abuse and repressive regime that were very similar to producing the conflict in the south. There are lots of similarities in the way in which the Sudanese government approached the south in the past and the way in which it is approaching the west. So far from shying away from putting human rights issues on the agenda in the interests of peace, we in Amnesty International don't believe that you can have peace without justice and human rights. They are absolutely a fundamental part of the process towards peace. And right now we actually have a mission in southern Sudan that is actually looking at those issues, and our reports that have been published on Sudan include not only Darfur -- we have published reports, for example, about political prisoners and
restrictions on freedom of expression and on the justice system in Sudan. We have a number of prisoners of conscience that we have adopted in Sudan. So we are pushing as hard as we can to change the system that exists, because otherwise Darfur is actually the consequence of a deeper disease in Sudan.

>>: On Somalia, can you just talk about a little bit.
MS. IRENE KHAN: Sorry. What would you like?
>>: On Somalia.
MS. IRENE KHAN: Sorry, I didn't understand. What would you like me to talk about Somalia?
>>: There was a disagreement by the warlords, which totally ignores the human rights aspects. It hasn't even been asked. I know there was press release about two years ago from Amnesty.
MS. IRENE KHAN: Yes.
>>: But nothing else happened.
MS. IRENE KHAN: No, it is not because we necessarily believe that human rights are not important for the peace process in Somalia. We have to make some tough choice inside the context of our own researchers and how much resources we have to be able to work in one country or the other. We would love to work on every country in the world, but obviously we don't have the financial ability to do that, and therefore sometimes you may find that we are not paying attention to a particular country, but that doesn't mean that there are -- that that is in any way our verdict on the human rights situation there.
A question on this side.

Yeah, just a quick question -- a quick question. I don't know if it will be a quick answer. Thanks for coming out, though.

(LAUGHTER) Thanks for coming out. Okay, anyways -- yeah. I'll get on with it.

Why has Amnesty International decreased its coverage on the political turmoil in Haiti?

MS. IRENE KHAN: Well, actually we haven't decreased our coverage on political turmoil in Haiti. I think, if I remember rightly, we published a report a few months ago, and we've been looking at issues of -- particularly the issue of impunity quite strongly. As you will remember, last year we had very intense activity, campaigning activity on Haiti, what we call within Amnesty a crisis alert, for about four months or so. And Haiti remains an area of major concern for us, because one of our key concerns -- and I even went -- I went to France and met with someone on Haiti, because our major concern was that even though the international -- the French multinational force went in, they did not actually address the issue of impunity. And so people who were past perpetrators were allowed to come back to power again and therefore feed into that cycle of violence and abuse.

DR. CARL AMRHEIN: Question in the balcony.

Okay. Can you hear me?

MS. IRENE KHAN: Yes.

Okay. I'm not sure how close Amnesty works with the U.N., but in regards to things that the U.N. has done or things that have
happened, like with Iraq and Rwanda, which have almost made the U.N. illegitimate and how that has affected what Amnesty does or endeavours to do and -- yeah.

MS. IRENE KHAN: Well, the word U.N. hides many different areas. You have the governments who are member states of the United Nations, and then you have the systems, the human rights machinery and other security machinery and so on of the United Nations, like the peacekeeping operations.

As an international lawyer, I personally believe that, and not just as Amnesty International, that the multilateral system of human rights that the United Nations has is really a very unique function of the United Nations. You could not -- you can have security unilaterally by governments. You can have development programs unilaterally by governments. You can't actually have a unilateral system of human rights. You need a multilateral system to promote human rights. That is a unique function that the U.N. performs, a very important function. Therefore I think any of us who believes in international human rights has to strengthen and promote that system. The system is in major reform and reform is underway. It is good. I mean, the ideas are good, but there are some risks in the path before we get to the end of it. That's one question there. And yes, we are supporting the reform process. We have got lots of ideas there and we are negotiating and putting our ideas on the table. Then you have the other part of the system where the U.N. is actually running operations, whether the U.N. High Commissioner.
We have -- for instance, last year we published a report about trafficking of women in Kosovo and how the U.N. peacekeeping operation had actually promoted the sex trade and therefore increased the risk of trafficking for many women. And we were very critical of the U.N. And the U.N. itself was actually quite shocked to find that information, because many of the people at the top of the U.N. were not aware of it. And we were invited to New York and we visited, sat down with them and gave them our recommendations, and they have picked up a few of those recommendations. There we have a constructive but critical relationship.

What I find very worrying is the way in which some governments are sidelining the multilateral machinery in favour of unilateralism. When governments do that, they actually create a separate system out there which they use to their advantage. Or they step out of it when they want.

And that's the real risk in Iraq where the U.N. doesn't exist. It has been virtually sidelined. You can't imagine -- neither the U.S. nor the U.K. nor the other allies are going to be able to work with the new government of Iraq, for example, in establishing human rights machinery. You need the High Commissioner for human rights there. You need the U.N. secretariat there, and they are not there.

>>: I watch BBC World News often, and I am often made very angry with what goes on around the world, various human rights abuses. I am wondering what kinds of things that we as individuals can do to help that sort of thing, other than just being angry.
MS. IRENE KHAN: Well, I'm sure this must have been planted by the local chapter of Amnesty International. (LAUGHTER)

Join Amnesty International! No, seriously. I think individuals -- what our experience in Amnesty has been -- it has been an interesting experience of individuals being able to do something about human rights, and there are many organizations that you can join to make your voice heard. And I think it's very important that you do it.

Interestingly enough, you know, Amnesty's U.S.A. membership has actually gone up post 9/11. That is because there are a lot of individuals who feel that they can't be complacent anymore. They can't sit on the sidelines anymore. I am glad to hear you feel that anger because that's a very good sign. We have to be outraged by what's happening. We have to be outraged that one in three women face violence at least once in their lifetime. We have to be enraged that the killings in Darfur are continuing. We have to be outraged by the fact that half a million people die because of small arms, and we have to be outraged by the double standards that are applied to human rights and convert that outrage very constructively into campaigning possibilities. And of course there are many campaigning possibilities that you will find on our web site. I am not saying that it is the guarantee that the human rights situation will change, but if you don't join and do something, certainly there is even less chance that things will change.

(APPLAUSE)
Yes. I think that everyone here agrees with your comments and views on human rights, and I certainly do.

I have three major comments or questions, basically questions.

One, what is your view on whether the organization such as the U.N. should intervene in countries where there's abuse of human rights or certainly ethnic cleansing, like west Darfur?

Secondly, do you believe that there is never a valid -- validation of violence in the world? I mean, is anyone ever justified in using violence?

I use an example that Gandhi, who was famous for nonviolence, advised the Jews of Germany during World War II to simply go with the flow, you know. Don't object. Which wasn't very good advice, of course.

Thirdly is what do you think a country should do that is subject to violence itself, such as Israel, where there are suicide bombings going on all the time, and isn't it a human right for that country to protect its citizens?

I would like your comments.

MS. IRENE KHAN: Let me start by saying that Amnesty International is not a pacifist organization. We do have a definition of prisoners of conscience as people who should not use violence, but we do support many situations without taking a position on whether a particular group is right or not to take -- to take up arms.

So in the sense of can violence ever be justified? Well,
I think that is a political decision that either groups or governments make. It's from -- from a human rights activist point of view, the issue is not violence. The issue is whether there are human rights abuses being committed. You know, governments tend to use force in the name of security, and many armed groups will use force in the name of liberty. But neither of them have the right to violate human rights or humanitarian law in the process of their struggle. I think that's the big thing, we know what kind of violence is being used. Is it actually having an impact on human rights? That's usually where Amnesty tends to focus.

You asked about U.N. intervention, and I'm assuming you're thinking about military intervention, like Bosnia or --

>>: Yes.

MS. IRENE KHAN: I think in the case of western Darfur, that's a very, very tough issue. You know, Darfur is the size of France. It's a big, big country. So from a purely practical point of view, it would be very difficult to stop human rights abuses in Darfur militarily. And the problem with military intervention is that if it is not successful, if it is not planned very carefully, then it can actually worsen the situation. And that's what we see in Iraq right now. So one has to be extremely careful about looking at, you know, a U.N. military intervention of that type.

But there are many things that can be done and are not being done in the context of Darfur. For example, the major issue here is oil trade, China's oil business in Sudan, and Russia's
arms trade with Sudan. Those are the two main blocks that have prevented the U.N. from putting sanctions on the Sudanese government, economic sanctions, for example, targeted economic sanctions that could have squeezed the regime into compliance on some of the issues.

So there are lots that can be done before one gets to military intervention. I'm not saying there won't be a situation where it is necessary to have military intervention. And there are examples of reasonably successful military intervention, but it's very, very tough. The toughest part is staying on afterwards. If you are not in for the long haul, then don't go in.

You talked about Israel and Palestine. You know, when I visited Israel and Palestine in 2002, I went to Jenin. This was just five days after the Israeli troops had withdrawn from Jenin. And going in there I saw the destruction. I talked to people there. There was a woman there who was sitting beside a pile of stones, and that was her home, and she told me -- she had a twisted wheelchair next to her. And she said that belonged to her handicapped son who couldn't leave the building before it was demolished by the Israeli soldiers.

The next day I went to a rehabilitation centre and there I met with victims of suicide bombers, because I wanted to hear the story, the pain and suffering on both sides. There I met a young woman. She had been a waitress in a restaurant, and she had just come -- finished her maternity leave and just started work the day the bomb exploded in the restaurant, put
by some Palestinian suicide bomber. And a piece of shrapnel went into her spine and she is now paralyzed from the waist down. She told me that the saddest thing is that she will never ever be able to carry her baby.

On both sides I heard the pain of two mothers. And really what struck me there was that there was so much that should bring the people of Israel and Palestine together, rather than separate them, and the security of one is so dependent on the security of the other. And unless both sides recognize that and work together, you will always have one pitting the security of the other. My security at the expense of your rights is never going to be an acceptable solution. And I am afraid that is what is happening in the Middle East.

(APPLAUSE)

MR. DAVID PERCY: I would like to thank the members of the audience for vigorous questioning, and I now call upon our Provost, Dr. Carl Amrhein.

DR. CARL AMRHEIN: Most respected guest, Ms. Khan, Dean Percy, ladies and gentlemen.

Ms. Khan, we are honoured that you accepted our invitation to deliver the University of Alberta visiting lecture in human rights this evening. We hope you will also accept our deep appreciation for your presentation here this evening.

(APPLAUSE)

Your lecture and frank assessment of the state of human rights in Canada and the world today provides us with a great challenge on the work that we all must do to ensure these issues
are addressed at home and abroad.

It has been our privilege to find ourselves in the presence of an individual who exemplifies the leadership required in this field and who articulates with such passion the action required.

Since its inception in 1961, Amnesty International has been at the forefront of advancing issues of human rights, and it is clear that your work is as relevant today as it was 40 years ago. We thank you for sharing your insights with us this evening.

It is our tradition that the University of Alberta present you with a gift so that you might remember your visit here this evening. Normally this time of year we would have provided you with the first winter blizzard, but our delivery system has broken down, so we must do otherwise.

So would you please join me here at the podium. This is an Inuit carving, known as an Inukshuk. And I will read a little bit about what an Inukshuk is.

An Inukshuk is a beacon, a marker left as a guide by those who have found their way for those who come after them. The Inukshuk is arranged in the shape of a human being that says, I have been here, you are on the right track. Though made of an inanimate rock, it embodies the persistence of the Inuit, who thrive despite living in one of the world's harshest environments.

Just as protecting the human rights of individual members of the community is the responsibility of the entire community,
so too must Inukshuks be built by people working together as a community. Your lecture here this evening has provided strength, leadership, and motivation for our community in Edmonton, and I have faith that we will move forward as individuals and as a community to strive for social justice the world over.

We hope that this Inukshuk will remind you of the deep appreciation we have for your work and the high esteem in which the entire community holds you.

(APPLAUSE)

(STANDING OVATION)

In closing, on behalf of all of us, I would like to extend a thank you to Dean Percy, Ms. Bakinson and Ms. Power, and our sign translators for their contribution this evening, and to Nsamble for sharing with us their beautiful and thoughtful music. Thank you to you all.

(APPLAUSE)

This lectureship would not exist without the generosity of the many visionary citizens, corporations, and foundations of Edmonton and beyond who believe it is important for our community to hear speakers such as Ms. Khan, speakers who celebrate and elucidate powerful ideas, who inspire and provoke discourse, and who remind us all of the responsibility we have as signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To all of our donors, your gifts provide this annual opportunity for us as a community to learn, question and participate in events that shape the world in which we live.
On behalf of the entire community, thank you for your generosity.

(APPLAUSE)

And finally, to all of our volunteers, friends and staff, thank you for your ongoing contributions to the lectureship. As advocates for peace, for equality and human dignity for all, your support of this lectureship means that the university achieves its goals to encourage not only our students, but our entire community, to contribute broadly as citizens of the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for joining us here this evening. I wish you a very pleasant drive home in the absence of our first annual blizzard, and we look forward to seeing you at next year's lecture. Goodnight and thank you.

(APPLAUSE)