

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Iraq: Thousands of detainees denied their basic rights**

Thousands of detainees being held by the US-led Multinational Force (MNF) in Iraq are trapped in a system of arbitrary detention that denies them their basic rights, Amnesty International said in a report published today. At the same time, there is increasing evidence of torture of detainees by the Iraqi security forces that the MNF underpins.

"Three years after it toppled Saddam Hussain, the US-led alliance has failed to put in place measures which respect the basic rights of detainees under its control and to safeguard them from possible torture or other abuses. The system of detention that has been established is arbitrary and a recipe for possible abuse," said Hassiba Hadj-Sahraoui, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme.

Some detainees have now been held without charge or trial by the MNF for more than two years without being given an adequate opportunity to challenge the reasons for their imprisonment. They face the prospect of being held for years more on the basis of information to which they do not have access. The systems the US and UK use to review detainees' cases fail to meet international standards, including the requirement for court oversight. Detainees are also routinely denied access to lawyers and their families.

The report *Beyond Abu Ghraib: Detention and torture in Iraq* focuses on human rights violations for which the MNF is directly responsible but points also to mounting evidence of torture by Iraqi security forces operating alongside the MNF, including the so-called Wolf Brigade that reports to the Iraqi Interior Ministry. There have also been cases in which detainees have died in the custody of Iraqi forces. Amnesty International is concerned that these cases and torture allegations have not been properly investigated and those responsible held to account. US and UK investigations into abuses by their forces have also generally focused on junior military personnel and sentences have failed to reflect the gravity of the offences.

It is imperative that both the MNF and the Iraqi authorities take urgent steps to reassert the importance of fundamental human rights if there is to be any hope of halting Iraq's slide towards ever increasing violence and sectarianism. In particular, they must ensure that detainees' rights are respected in full, that all allegations of torture or other abuses are thoroughly and promptly investigated, and that those responsible for ordering or carrying out abuses, however senior, are brought to justice.

"International human rights law applicable in Iraq as well as domestic Iraqi legislation contain safeguards

to protect the fundamental rights of people in detention – including the right not to be subjected to torture or ill-treatment. It is high time for all parties to the conflict to start observing the laws to which they have been and remain legally bound," said Hassiba Hadj-Sahraoui.

For a copy of the report, *Beyond Abu Ghraib: Detention and torture in Iraq*, please see:  
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde140012006>

#### Public Document

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