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Iraq: Torture not isolated -- independent investigations vital

There is a real crisis of leadership in Iraq -- with double standards and double speak on human rights, Amnesty International said today.

"The latest evidence of torture and ill-treatment emerging from Abu Ghraib prison will exacerbate an already fragile situation. The prison was notorious under Saddam Hussein -- it should not be allowed to become so again. Iraq has lived under the shadow of torture for far too long. The Coalition leadership must send a clear signal that torture will not be tolerated under any circumstances and that the Iraqi people can now live free of such brutal and degrading practices," Amnesty International said.

"There must be a fully independent, impartial and public investigation into all allegations of torture. Nothing less will suffice. If Iraq is to have a sustainable and peaceful future, human rights must be a central component of the way forward. The message must be sent loud and clear that those who abuse human rights will be held accountable.

"Our extensive research in Iraq suggests that this is not an isolated incident. It is not enough for the USA to react only once images have hit the television screens".

Amnesty International has received frequent reports of torture or other ill-treatment by Coalition Forces during the past year. Detainees have reported being routinely subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during arrest and detention. Many have told Amnesty International that they were tortured and ill-treated by US and UK troops during interrogation. Methods often reported include prolonged sleep deprivation; beatings; prolonged restraint in painful positions, sometimes combined with exposure to loud music; prolonged hooding; and exposure to bright lights. Virtually none of the allegations of torture or ill-treatment has been adequately investigated by the authorities.

Amnesty International is calling for investigations into alleged abuses by Coalition Forces to be conducted by a body that is competent, impartial and independent, and seen to be so, and that any findings of such investigations be made public. In addition reparation, including compensation, must be paid to the victims or to their families.

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