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News Flash

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Iraq: Civilian casualties

"As fighting increasingly moves into urban areas it is essential that the military authorities step up their attempts to protect civilians," Amnesty International said today.

"We have seen reports from Basra of the impact that urban warfare can have on civilians and we are seeking explicit information from the military authorities on the steps they have taken to minimise civilian casualties."

All parties to the conflict in Iraq must adhere strictly to the rules of international humanitarian law regarding the protection of civilians or civilian objects. Military attacks must not cause disproportionate loss of civilian life. In particular there should be:

- no direct attack on civilians or civilian objects
- no attack on the infrastructure even if used for military purposes, if the incidental short-term and long-term consequences for civilians would be disproportionate to the concrete and direct military advantage sought in the specific attack
- no attack on media outlets solely because they are being used for propaganda purposes
- no attack on other civilian objects even if their destruction is deemed by the attacker to be likely to lessen the will of the enemy to fight.

"Parties to the war must take all necessary precautions to spare civilians: issuing warnings to civilians wherever possible and refraining from using civilians as 'human shields'," the human rights organisation concluded.

For further information on Amnesty International's concerns and recommendations about the crisis in Iraq please visit: <http://www.amnesty.org/go/iraq>

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