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Iraq: Amnesty International Daily Digest - March 26 2003

War Crimes during military operation

There are reports giving rise to concerns that war crimes may have been committed by both sides in the recent fighting, Amnesty International said today.

"The bombing of a television station simply because it is being used for the purposes of propaganda is unacceptable. It is a civilian object, and thus protected under international humanitarian law," said Claudio Cordone, Senior Director for International Law at Amnesty International.

"Attacking a civilian object and carrying out a disproportionate attack are war crimes. The onus is on the Coalition forces to demonstrate the military use of the TV station and, if that is indeed the case, to show that the attack took into account the risk to civilian lives."

Iraqi forces are reported to have deliberately shelled civilians in Basra and to placing military objectives in close proximity to civilians and civilian objects. There have also been reports of Iraqis dressed allegedly in civilian clothes in order to allow surprise attacks on coalition troops.

POWs and Geneva Convention

The International Committee of the Red Cross must be given access to all prisoners of war being held (III, 126).

Willful killing of POWs, torture, or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury, are breaches of the Geneva Convention (VI, 128).

For more information on the Iraq Crisis go to http://web.amnesty.org/pages/iraq_summary

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