

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

News Flash

AI Index: MDE 14/065/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 078
2 April 2003

Iraq: Use of cluster bombs -- Civilians pay the price

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the high toll of civilian casualties and the use of cluster bombs in US military attacks in heavily populated areas.

On 1 April, at least 33 civilians including many children were reportedly killed and around 300 injured in US attacks on the town of al-Hilla. Amnesty International is particularly disturbed by reports that cluster bombs were used in the attacks and may have been responsible for some of the civilian deaths.

"The use of cluster bombs in an attack on a civilian area of al-Hilla constitutes an indiscriminate attack and a grave violation of international humanitarian law," Amnesty International emphasized today.

"If the US is serious about protecting civilians, it must publicly commit to a moratorium on the use of cluster weapons. Using cluster munitions will lead to indiscriminate killing and injuring of civilians," the organization added.

According to reports, the type of cluster bomblets used in al-Hilla was BLU97 A/B. Each cannister contains 202 small bomblets -- BLU97 -- the size of a soft drink can. These cluster bomblets scatter over a large area approximately the size of two football fields. At least 5% of these 'dud' bomblets do not explode upon impact, turning them into de facto anti-personnel mines because they continue to pose a threat to people, including civilians, who come into contact with them.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>

