

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

News Flash

AI Index: MDE 14/103/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 106
30 April 2003

Iraq: death of civilian demonstrators must be investigated

The town of Falluja, west of Baghdad has today witnessed another incident which resulted in the death of 3 civilians and the wounding of a further 8. This latest shooting occurred whilst townspeople were demonstrating about the shooting of Iraqi civilians by US troops on Monday night. Between 13 and 17 civilians were shot dead and more than 70 were wounded on Monday, when soldiers occupying a local school fired on demonstrators protesting against the US presence in Iraq.

Because of the conflicting reports surrounding the killings which occurred on Monday and today, US authorities must establish a thorough, independent and public investigation into these killings.

"There must be an urgent enquiry into these reports. There are very real concerns that the US forces may have used excessive force," Amnesty International said.

"The USA and the UK must ensure that the rights of freedom of expression and assembly are not arbitrarily restricted."

US troops say that they came under fire after asking a group of about 200 people to disperse, and had to respond. Local residents state that approximately 200 unarmed people were protesting and carrying pictures of former President Saddam Hussein.

Amnesty International calls on the USA and the UK to deploy forces in sufficient numbers and with the right training and equipment to restore law and order, until Iraqi police forces can operate effectively. These latest incidents simply confirm the urgent need for police forces, not the military, to be dealing with law and order issues.

US and UK forces, as the occupying power, are under an obligation to implement human rights and humanitarian law in the areas under their control. The Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by the Law Enforcement Officials - including police and soldiers - require that use of force and firearms should be a last resort, and used "only if other means remain ineffective or without any promise of achieving the desired result". (Principle 4) whenever force or firearms are used this should be proportionate to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved; and minimize damage and injury.

For a full copy of Amnesty International's report: Iraq: Responsibilities of the occupying powers please go to: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde140892003>

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>