

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

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Iraq: Amnesty International in Basra - Field Update May 8 2003

Police brutality

The delegation documented the cases of two incidents of shootings by British soldiers, one such case is the one of 14 year old Ali Salim Aziz Allami. Delegates interviewed his family and a witness.

AI delegates interviewed a 14 year old who was bleeding in Umm Qassr. He told delegates he had been beaten up by a British soldier. Delegates were not able to verify the claim but are following up the case.

The delegation interviewed a group of men who alleged they had been beaten by British soldiers. A lawyer provide AI with details of another case in Zubar.

Policing and security

A number of Iraqi auxiliary police have been hired to work on policing alongside British military personnel. AI delegates visited two police stations and a checkpoint to observe how both British and Iraqi police conducted themselves.

AI delegates obtained information from British sources about the reform of the police, including the process by which local police are being recruited, the screening process in place and the training programmes for them.

There are reports that crime has escalated, and that people suspected of committing crimes including rape, murder, kidnapping and looting, are detained. Delegates obtained information about the way in which detainees are processed. AI was told that women are now coming forward to submit complaints, mainly about domestic violence.

Amnesty International delegates visited Ghamata's Children's School in Al-Haritha, Basra, and documented the unexploded missile that remains in the playground.

Amnesty International delegates had an informal meeting with the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), coordinator for the south, Ole Woehler Olsen.

Judicial reform

Amnesty International delegates interviewed several British officers about the reform of the judicial system in Iraq. At the moment there are no operating prisons in Basra, but prison advisers are due to visit Basra to advise on the building of new prisons. The British forces do not want to use the old sites, due to the connotations of former prisons with torture and other human rights violations.

AI delegates held meetings with representatives of the Islamic Action Organisation and the Iraqi National Congress. They also met with Sheik Muzahem Al Tamimi, head of Basra's civil board and head of the Al Tamimi tribe.

Revenge killings

AI delegates followed up three reports of revenge killings against former members of the Bath party. The manner in which these killings have been carried out could indicate a new strand trend of revenge killings in the Basra area.

Stranded foreigners

In a visit to the Pity hospital in Basra, AI delegates interviewed two foreign nationals -- both of whom were former POWs -- who have lost their documents and who are currently stranded in Iraq.

Missing people

AI delegates conducted interviews with people searching for missing relatives outside the ICRC. Delegates organised a drop-in meeting for people to give details to Amnesty International about missing relatives. Delegates documented cases of people missing since 1986 to the current conflict. AI delegates visited the military post in the centre of Umm Qassr. Outside the post, within less than 30 minutes, delegates obtained 36 filled in questionnaires of people searching for missing relatives presumed to be POWs.

Countless people continued to contact the Amnesty International delegation to provide details of human rights violations, mainly disappeared relatives. One community leader provided Amnesty International with a list of 154 names of people that were executed in 1999 after the killing of Al Sayyid Al Sadr. The delegation interviewed former political prisoners.

The delegation continued to document the location of mass graves.

Public Document

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