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@HUMAN RIGHTS UNDER INCREASING ATTACK DURING WARTIME
Amnesty International highlights range of violations

Amnesty International said today (Friday 8 February) that since the start of the Gulf war, basic human rights have been under increasing attack in many of the countries involved in the conflict - both in the Middle East and elsewhere.

"In times of war, governments often tend to sweep human rights aside in the name of political or military expediency," Amnesty International said. "They are also selective in the human rights violations they condemn - those of their enemies are loudly criticized while those of their allies are overlooked."

Over the past two weeks, Amnesty International has raised its concerns about a range of human rights issues - including detention without charge or trial, treatment of prisoners and detainees, and the protection of refugees - with many of the governments involved in the conflict directly or indirectly.

- in **Egypt**, urgent appeals have been issued for two people arrested and held apparently because of peaceful anti-war activities. One was an opposition newspaper journalist who spoke out against the war at a Cairo mosque; the other was a medical doctor, who was also director of a publishing company which reportedly published a critical statement by the Egyptian Medical Syndicate.

- in **Iraq**, Amnesty International has written urging the government not to subject prisoners - both civilians and military - to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during the war. The organization also expressed concerns about the government's stated "human shield" policy, under which prisoners of war are apparently deliberately exposed to risk of death or injury by being held at military targets.

The organization said this would be cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and noted that it violates the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war.

- in the **Israeli-Occupied Territories**, the organization has written to the government asking that all prisoners and detainees be given all possible protection during the war, including being given gas masks where appropriate. The organization has also expressed concerns relating to the use of firearms to enforce the curfew imposed on the Occupied Territories and relating to summary trials of people accused of having violated the curfew.

- in **Saudi Arabia**, Amnesty International has written to the government to express concern that the people arrested on charges of attacking a bus carrying U.S. and Saudi Arabian military personnel may be at risk of execution.

- in the **United Kingdom**, the organization has told the government in a letter that the detention pending deportation of more than 50 Iraqis and Palestinians on national security grounds is contrary to international standards because they are not told specific reasons for their detention and do not have the right to a fair judicial hearing, with legal representation. Amnesty International believes that some of those still held - four were released on 6 February - may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely because of their non-violent political views and activities or their nationality.

- in the **USA**, a soldier jailed after he refused to help prepare supplies for troops in Saudi Arabia because he objects for moral and religious reasons to participating in all wars has been adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience.

The organization said that while it has raised specific concerns in these countries, it was investigating human rights violations related to the war in a range of other countries.

In particular, Amnesty International is monitoring reported moves to expel people, including refugees and other Middle Eastern nationals, on national security grounds in various countries. The organization said it was concerned that no one should be sent to a country where they risk being imprisoned as prisoners of conscience, tortured or even executed.

Amnesty International stressed that it took no position on the Gulf war itself and neither supported nor opposed any of the governments involved - its concern was solely the protection of fundamental human rights.

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