

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 14/005/2005

18 February 2005

UA 42/05 Fear for safety/ possible "disappearance"/ fear of torture or ill-treatment

IRAQ/ USA Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi (f), businesswoman

Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi was arrested by US and Iraqi military personnel on 17 February. Her whereabouts are unknown and Amnesty International is concerned for her safety.

At 4am on 17 February, US soldiers and members of the Iraqi National Guard forced their way into the house of Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi, in the district of Hay al-Jami'a in Baghdad. They handcuffed and blindfolded her, and beat, handcuffed and blindfolded her two daughters, Nura aged 15 and Sarah aged 20. The soldiers reportedly took away jewellery and US\$ 2,500 in cash from the house. They also allegedly raided Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi's office, next door to her house, taking three computers and a mobile phone. According to her daughters, the soldiers accused Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi of "supporting the resistance", before taking her away to an unknown location. At the time of her arrest, Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi was recovering from a surgical operation that she had undergone a week earlier.

Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi was detained a first time in December 2003 together with her sister Nahla and her brother Ayad, on suspicion of supporting an armed opposition group. She has claimed that Ayad died in US custody as a result of torture and ill-treatment. Two other brothers, 'Ali Hafez Ahmad and Mo'taz Hafez Ahmad, are being held in US custody in Iraq without charge or trial. Amnesty International does not at this stage have any information on their dates of arrest and place of detention.

Following her detention in December 2003, Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi and her sister Nahla were held in Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad until their release in July 2004. After her release Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi gave interviews to international media in which she alleged that she was tortured and ill-treated.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The US military in Iraq has used systematic torture and ill-treatment of detainees. Iraqis have alleged that soldiers have ill-treated civilians during house raids, and taking cash, and other belongings, including jewellery.

At the end of April 2004, the worldwide media published photographs of Iraqi detainees being tortured or ill-treated by US agents at Abu Ghraib prison. Reported methods of torture and ill-treatment included sleep deprivation, beatings, forcing detainees to stand for long periods or listen to loud music, and sexual humiliation. Allegations of women detainees being subjected to beatings and sexual abuse, including rape, were also reported. Some detainees have died in US custody, allegedly as a result of torture. A number of US soldiers have been convicted of abuse of detainees by US courts martial. One of them, Charles Graner, was found guilty of abusing Iraqi detainees in Abu Ghraib prison and was sentenced to 10 years in prison by a court in Texas on 15 January 2005.

Amnesty International has called on the US government to undertake full, independent and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture by US agents and to make the results public.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi, who was detained after US troops and members of the Iraqi National Guard stormed her house;
- urging the authorities to reveal her whereabouts and the reason for her detention;

- calling for assurances that she will not be tortured or ill-treated if she is in detention;
- calling on the authorities to grant her immediate access to her lawyer, family and medical treatment she may need following her recent surgery;
- expressing concern that Huda Hafez Ahmad al-'Azawi and her two daughters were allegedly beaten during the raid;
- calling for an immediate and impartial investigation into these allegations, with anyone found responsible to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Fax numbers and e-mail addresses for the Iraqi authorities are not available.

Please send appeals via the Iraqi embassy or diplomatic representative in your country, asking them to forward your appeals to:

- Ghazi al-Yawar, President of the Republic of Iraq
- Dr. Iyad 'Allawi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq

COPIES TO:

Ask for the embassy to send copies to:

- Bakhtiar Amin, Human Rights Minister

Please also send copies to:

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
Office of the Secretary
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301, USA

Fax: + 1 703 697 8339

Email: Send appeals via the Department of Defense website:

<http://www.defenselink.mil/faq/comment.html>

and to diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 April 2005.