

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

12 April 2011

AI Index: MDE 14/020/2011

'Days of Rage: Protests and Repression in Iraq'

Testimonies / Case studies

Southern region of Iraq

Mu'ataz Muwafaq Waissi

Mu'ataz Muwafaq Waissi, married with one child, was one of five people reportedly shot dead in Mosul on the "Day of Rage" protests on 25 February. His brother said he had been shot in the head by a sniper. Witnesses told Amnesty International that on the morning of the 25 February, security forces used deafening sound bombs and fired shots in the air in an attempt to disperse people gathered outside council buildings. By midday at least two demonstrators had been shot dead.

Oday Alzaidy

Oday, an activist, told Amnesty International that on 13 February he and a group of protesters were gathered on the street in Baghdad when armed forces told them to move. He agreed to go in an army vehicle to look at an alternative spot. On reaching the area he was ordered out of the vehicle and men in plain clothes forced him into another vehicle, where he was beaten and blindfolded. He was then driven to an unknown location nearby and held for five days, tortured and ill-treated. He said:

"Every day they beat me and gave me electric shocks. They told me to confess that I was sent by the Ba'ath party [the party led by former President Saddam Hussain]. When I denied this, they beat me even harder with batons and they shocked me with electric prods." He spent two days in hospital after his release. Undeterred, he participated in the "Day of Rage" protests on 25 February.

Abdel-Jabbar Shaloub Hammadi

Abdel-Jabbar, an activist, told Amnesty International that on 24 February he was stopped in the street in Baghdad by about 30 armed police. He was subsequently beaten, blindfolded and taken to a police building where he was tortured. He was suspended from the ceiling by his wrists, suspended from the ceiling with his legs and arms tied together and had freezing water thrown over him. After five days he was transferred to the Intelligence Department in Baghdad, and released without charge on 8 March.

Journalistic Freedoms Observatory in Baghdad

On 23 February, security forces raided the office of the Journalistic Freedoms Observatory in Baghdad, confiscating IT equipment and its archive. The organization has been campaigning for media freedom in Iraq for several years, including against restrictions on media coverage of the recent demonstrations.

Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Rezhwan 'Ali

Rezhwan 'Ali, 15, attended a legal demonstration on 17 February in Sulaimaniya's Sara Square, now referred to as Azady 'Freedom Square.' Thousands of people gathered and, following the protest, hundreds of people marched to government buildings and threw stones at the guards. Security forces then fired live ammunition at the protesters. Rezhwan was shot in the head and died instantly.

Surkew Zahid and Sherzad Taha

On 19 February, when protests in Sara Square ended at around 4pm, hundreds of protesters started to walk towards the KDP headquarters to protest against the 17 February events when a 15-year-old boy was shot. Video clips clearly show security forces, including some in plain clothes, shooting at demonstrators with Kalashnikov rifles and pistols. Surkew Zahid, 16, and Sherzad Taha, 28, were seriously injured and died the following day in hospital.

Fatima Ahmed* (not her real name)

Fatima is an activist aged 42 and married with children. On the morning of 25 February she contacted other women activists to join the planned demonstration in Erbil. That evening three armed men in plain clothes came to her house. She told Amnesty International:

"I asked them what they wanted from me... He started threatening me. He said if you don't stop your political opposition activities we will kidnap you, rape you and videotape the rape."

Since then Fatima Ahmed has been staying in a friend's house and her children are staying with their father in another flat. She refused to lodge a complaint with the courts because she has no faith in the judiciary. Since the incident she has not gone to work, for fears she may be kidnapped and raped.

Sharwan Azad Faqi 'Abdallah

Sharwan Azad Faqi, 35, an NGO worker married with two children, was in a park in Erbil on 25 February when he was arrested. He was detained for four days and tortured. Marks of torture were visible on his face when he met Amnesty International delegates in Erbil on 11 March.

He said: *"Three men confronted me, other men arrived within seconds. I received several punches on the head... but I managed to pull away. But within seconds another group of security men in civilian clothes started punching me and hitting me. There was blood streaming from my nose and left eye. My head was very painful. I was taken to the Asayish Gishti in Erbil... an interrogator accused me of being a troublemaker. I was asked to sign a written testimony. When I said I needed to see what is on the paper he hit me hard. Then I signed the paper without reading it."*