

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

News Flash

AI Index: MDE 14/062/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 075
1 April 2003

Iraq: US must investigate civilian deaths

Published

Amnesty International is extremely concerned at the increasing number of incidents in the conflict in Iraq which have led to civilian deaths and casualties.

"United States authorities must conduct an independent and thorough investigation into an attack yesterday on a civilian vehicle that resulted in the deaths of seven women and children," Amnesty International said today.

"Anyone suspected of unlawfully killing civilians must be brought to justice."

Amnesty International pointed out that US and UK forces must take all necessary precautions to protect civilians, regardless of any violations by Iraqi forces.

"The duty to protect one's own soldiers cannot justify any violation of international humanitarian law. The military must implement measures that will safeguard the lives of civilians and other non-combatants and ensure that incidents like this are never repeated."

According to the Washington Post, on 31 March soldiers with the US Army's 3rd Infantry Division opened fire on an unidentified four-wheel drive vehicle as it was approaching a US checkpoint near al-Najaf.

The newspaper reported that an officer initially ordered the soldiers to fire a warning shot, but as the vehicle came closer to the checkpoint, the officer ordered the soldiers to stop the vehicle. It is unclear whether the soldiers had fired a warning shot before one or more of the Bradley Fighting Vehicles opened fire with 25mm cannons, killing 7 of the 15 passengers in the civilian vehicle.

The US Department of Defense reportedly stated that the shooting occurred after the driver of the vehicle had ignored shouted warnings and warning shots, which does not appear to be consistent with the version of the incident reported by the Washington Post.

Video clip of Irene Khan talking about civilian casualties.
http://emedia.amnesty.org/civilian_deaths.ram

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>