

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

News Flash

AI Index: MDE 14/094/2003 (Public)
News Service No: 094
17 April 2003

Iraq: Response to demonstrations and disorder shockingly inadequate

Amnesty International expressed concern today at the continuing violence in the northern city of Mosul. At least three people were killed and 12 injured, including two children, during an incident yesterday in which US forces exchanged gunfire during a demonstration near the governor's building.

Coming only one day after 10 people were killed and 16 wounded in a similar incident, these latest killings raise real concerns about the protection of civilian lives and of their right to freedom of expression and assembly.

"The response to demonstrations and public disorder on the part of coalition troops has been shockingly inadequate and there are concerns that the US forces may have used excessive force. The first taste of the Coalition's approach to law and order will not have inspired confidence in the Iraqi people," Amnesty International said.

"US authorities should conduct an impartial, independent and thorough investigation into the incidents to establish whether troops responded with excessive use of force."

Amnesty International calls on the USA and the UK to deploy forces in sufficient numbers and with the right training and equipment to restore law and order, until Iraqi police forces can operate effectively. An effective and fair vetting procedure for members of the Iraqi police forces should be set up urgently, so as to reduce the chance of restoring to their duties officials who may have been involved in human rights violations. In exercising or supervising policing functions, the USA and the UK must ensure that the rights of freedom of expression and assembly are not arbitrarily restricted.

Background

US and UK forces, as the occupying power, are under an obligation to implement human rights and humanitarian law in the areas under their control. The Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by the Law Enforcement Officials - including police and soldiers - require that use of force and firearms should be a last resort, and used "only if other means remain ineffective or without any promise of achieving the desired result". (Principle 4) whenever force or firearms are used this should be proportionate to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved; and minimize damage and injury.

For a full copy of Amnesty International's report: Iraq: Responsibilities of the occupying powers please go to: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde140892003>

Public Document

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