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Iraq: People come first

The war on Iraq has led to the deaths of hundreds, if not thousands, of Iraqi civilians. Some have been killed by bombs and bullets. Many more are at serious risk from the collapse of infrastructure and widespread lawlessness. A generation of children has endured traumatic upheaval.

For decades AI has campaigned on behalf of the people of Iraq, seeking to draw the world's attention to the horrendous violations of their human rights by the Iraqi government. During the war, AI sent a clear message: the people of Iraq must come first.

Even in times of war, states have a duty to respect international humanitarian law standards and to protect civilians.

AI has called on the USA, the UK and their allies as well as on the Iraqi government: not to attack civilians

not to use weapons that kill and maim indiscriminately

to treat civilian detainees fairly and humanely

to treat combatants according to the Geneva Conventions

to prioritize the safety and needs of the Iraqi people

to protect and help refugees and the internally displaced

to ensure that perpetrators of crimes under international law are brought to justice

to enable human rights monitors to be deployed throughout Iraq as soon as is practicable

to support the UN's humanitarian and human rights work

to allow independent investigation of their conduct.

During the first weeks of the war, evidence emerged of a high toll of civilian casualties and of the use of cluster bombs in US military attacks in heavily populated areas. AI called for any credible allegation concerning unlawful killings of civilians to be fully investigated and for those found responsible to be individually held to account. Unlawful killings may result from direct or indiscriminate attacks, or from the use of indiscriminate weapons.

At the same time, AI called on Iraqi forces not to use tactics that blur the distinction between combatants and civilians, such as combatants wearing civilian clothes in order to mount surprise attacks.

Following reports that Iraqi hospitals were stretched to their limits by the number of casualties, and the threat of a health emergency because of the lack of safe drinking water, AI urged all parties to ensure prompt access for international humanitarian organizations.

AI is campaigning to ensure that in the aftermath of the conflict, the protection of the human rights of the Iraqi people is made central to the reconstruction of Iraq.

'They don't think we are human beings'

AI's campaign against racial discrimination in the Russian Federation

"I was with my parents, Begzadi and Sultan Akhmedov [above]. It was the first time we had dared to go out to work the field... There were about 15 of them, in three cars, one of them a police car... they just started telling us to go 'home', saying we did not

belong here... They laughed at us, telling us to go to China, Viet Nam, Canada... They don't think we are human beings... My parents were terribly upset."

Gulya Ishikhova, May 2002

Gulya Ishikhova and her parents are Meskhetians living in Krasnodar Territory in the southwest of the Russian Federation. The Meskhetians are a largely Muslim group who were forcibly expelled from Georgia in 1944 by the former Soviet regime. Citizens of the former Soviet Union who were permanently resident in the Russian Federation in February 1992 are by law Russian citizens. Most Meskhetians living in the Russian Federation have been able to exercise their right to citizenship.

However, the vast majority of the 13,000 to 16,000 Meskhetians living in Krasnodar Territory continue to be denied their legal rights, including their right to citizenship, because of discriminatory legislation and practices in the Territory. They are denied access to pensions, child benefits and higher education. They cannot officially register house or vehicle purchases, marriages or deaths. In addition, they are frequently stopped and questioned by police on the pretext of checking their identity documents and obstructed in their work or going about their daily business.

Meskhetians living in Krasnodar Territory are one of the groups featured in an AI report launched in March 2003. *Dokumenty! Discrimination on grounds of race in the Russian Federation* (EUR 46/001/2003) shows how legislation governing registration and citizenship requirements is often applied in a discriminatory way. Chechens and people from the Caucasus living in Moscow often face hostility from the authorities. For example, police target them disproportionately for checks of their identity documents. Asylum-seekers and refugees suffer the additional difficulty that their documentation is

frequently not recognized by the police.

Discrimination on grounds of race is a reality for many members of ethnic or national minority groups in the Russian Federation. Victims whose cases have come to the attention of AI are predominantly students, asylum-seekers and refugees from Africa, but also include citizens of the Russian Federation (including ethnic Chechens and Jews), as well as people from the south Caucasus, from South, Southeast and Central Asia, from the Middle East and from Latin America.

National and international law promise those living in the Russian Federation equality and protection from discrimination. However, procedures and practices on the ground, as well as local laws, mean that racial discrimination frequently goes unrecorded and unpunished. Indeed, the very authorities and institutions charged with upholding human rights are often complicit in such abuses.

As in many other countries, law enforcement agencies in the Russian Federation often reflect rather than challenge discriminatory attitudes in society at large. AI's research indicates that many racist attacks are not reported to the police because the victims fear further abuses by the police themselves. Police often fail to register such attacks as racially motivated or to investigate them. The result is that victims of racist crime rarely see justice done.

People with the power and responsibility to initiate change are now acknowledging that racism is a serious problem in the Russian Federation. For example, President Vladimir Putin and the Prosecutor General have made public statements that racist offences will not be tolerated.

These statements stand in stark contrast to practices in the past, and which persist in certain regions of the Russian Federation, of influential people inflaming prejudices against members of ethnic minorities for reasons of political expediency. The parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2003 and March 2004 will test

whether the Russian Federation can avoid the tendency seen in many other countries to scapegoat ethnic minorities for political gain.

To mark the launch of its report, AI held a press conference in Moscow which was attended by some 40 journalists and press representatives. Following the press conference, AI hosted a roundtable for representatives of around 20 Russian non-governmental organizations working to combat racism and discrimination in the Russian Federation. The UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, which discussed the Russian Federation in March, issued observations reflecting many of AI's recommendations.

AI hopes that its report, issued as part of AI's worldwide campaign against human rights abuses in the Russian Federation, will contribute to the ongoing work of individuals and organizations working for the right to be free from racial discrimination.

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Childhood lost in the Philippines

“My father couldn't afford my schooling because it was too expensive... I learned how to steal. That's the time the police caught me. They placed me in a sack and I was beaten up by the police. They pointed their guns at me. Then the policeman said: 'If you want to see your mother just pray...'"

A 17-year-old detainee talking to a street children's organization, Balay sa Gugma

Filipino children who come into conflict with the law tend to come from the most disadvantaged and marginalized sectors of society. Many have been raised in poverty and have received little or no education. Many of the 200,000 children who live on the streets have suffered domestic violence or sexual abuse.

Street children are particularly likely to be arrested as they may be forced to beg or steal in order to survive. Addiction to glue-sniffing is common and increases the risk of being taken into custody. They are particularly vulnerable in detention because they do not have family and community support.

Often handcuffed on arrest, children may be subjected to punches and slaps, or beatings with truncheons, rifle butts or canes. There have also been reports of child suspects being assaulted by the adults who accused them of crimes in the presence of police, sometimes with active police participation. Some children have reported having their fingernails singed with a lit cigarette or being subjected to electric shocks. Interviews conducted by local non-governmental organizations indicate that many children in detention have little or no understanding of why they were arrested or the charges against them. Children rarely have any access to lawyers and many have reported signing documents they did not understand.

In detention children – both girls and boys – have been raped and sexually assaulted. A serious and widespread problem is that child detainees are frequently held in adult jails. In some facilities they share cells with adults. Such intimate and constant contact with adult detainees – including those who have committed serious crimes – leaves children highly vulnerable to sexual assault or other abuse.

Facilities are overcrowded, often oppressively hot and airless with inadequate sanitary

facilities. In one prison in Luzon children had nowhere to sleep as the beds were taken by adult detainees and the floor was wet with urine. Prison visitors have reported seeing children fighting for food.

At least eight young people – all aged under 18 at the time of their alleged offence – are currently reported to be under sentence of death in the Philippines. In many cases their death sentences were imposed following an incorrect assumption on arrest that they were legally adults.

For further information and action you can take, see Philippines: A different childhood – the apprehension and detention of child suspects and offenders (ASA 35/007/2003) and www.amnesty.org

Chinese use mobile death vans to execute prisoners

The use of lethal injection as a method of execution is becoming increasingly popular among provincial authorities in China. In January 2003 a journalist and a group of “several dozen” court officers from all prefectures, cities and counties in Gansu province were taken by officials of the provincial high court to an unnamed detention centre near Lanzhou to attend a lecture and then witness the execution by lethal injection of 11 convicted prisoners. This was reportedly the largest group of prisoners to be executed by lethal injection on one single occasion since the method was introduced in Lanzhou.

Execution by lethal injection as an alternative to the firing squad was introduced in China in the revised Criminal Procedure Law in 1997 and was first used on an experimental basis in Yunnan province. The current “strike hard” anti-crime campaign, launched in 2001, under which defendants are often sentenced to death for crimes which at other times are punishable by imprisonment, has led to a rise in executions. During 2001 and 2002 AI recorded more than 5,900 death sentences and more than 3,500 executions in China, although the true figures were believed to be much higher.

In an effort to improve cost-efficiency, Chinese provincial authorities are beginning to introduce so-called mobile execution vans. These are intended to replace the traditional method of execution by firing squad in which prisoners are taken to an execution ground and made to kneel with hands cuffed before being shot in the head. Officials in Yunnan province explained that only four people are required to carry out the execution in the mobile vans: the executioner, one member of the court, one official from the procuratorate and one forensic doctor.

Eighteen mobile execution vans, converted 24-seater buses, are being distributed to all intermediate courts and one high court in Yunnan province. The windowless execution chamber at the back contains a metal bed on which the prisoner is strapped down. Once the needle is attached by the doctor, an act which breaches international medical ethics, a police officer presses a button and an automatic syringe inserts the lethal drug into the prisoner’s vein. The execution can be watched on a video monitor next to the driver’s seat and can be recorded if required.

The newspaper Beijing Today reported that use of the vans was approved by the legal authorities in Yunnan province on 6 March. Later that same day, two farmers, Liu Huafu, aged 21, and Zhou Chaojie, aged 25, who had been convicted of drug trafficking, were executed by lethal injection in a mobile execution van. Zhao Shijie, president of the Yunnan Provincial High Court, was quoted as praising the new system: “The use of lethal injection shows that China’s death penalty system is becoming more civilized and humane.” However, members of China’s legal community have voiced their concerns that it will only lead to an increase in the use of the

death penalty.

No justice for Burundi massacre victims

This six-year-old girl is one of the few survivors of a massacre by the Burundian army in September 2002. When AI delegates met her, she described in vivid, painful detail how her grandfather, parents, sisters and baby brother were shot and their house set on fire. She told how she herself escaped by crawling between the legs of the soldiers as they entered her home. The soldiers turned and fired on her as she ran, wounding her in the arm.

In February 2003, the two army officers charged in connection with this massacre walked free from a military court [**trans: conseil de guerre**]. They were convicted of a minor charge, sentenced to four months' imprisonment (less than the time they had already been held) and released.

Between 173 and 267 unarmed civilians were killed in Itaba commune, Gitega province, on 9 September 2002. Many of the victims were children and elderly people, and most were shot at point-blank range. Others were shot as they ran away, or burned alive in houses where they had hidden.

Information about the massacre was initially hidden. As news began to seep out, the authorities claimed that the victims had been killed in crossfire between the army and combatants from an armed political group, the CNDD-FDD. As more details came to light, it became clear that the army was solely responsible for the killings, that CNDD-FDD fighters had already left the area and that the civilian population had been deliberately targeted. AI delegates, including Secretary General Irene Khan, met the President of Burundi and other senior government and military representatives about 10 days after the massacre. The government authorities not only acknowledged that the killings had been carried out by the armed forces, but promised that justice would be done.

Largely as a result of strong national and international condemnation, two army officers were arrested and accused of murder. However, the charge of murder was dropped during the trial and lesser charges of breaching public solidarity [**trans: manquement à la solidarité publique**] and failing to follow orders [**trans: violation de consignes militaires**] were introduced. After a two-day trial, on 21 February 2003, the officers were convicted only on the charge of failing to follow orders.

The Itaba massacre was only one in a series of mass killings by the armed forces in Burundi last year. More than 500 unarmed civilians, including scores of children, were extrajudicially executed in 2002, often in reprisal for the activities of armed political groups operating in the area. Scores of unarmed Burundian civilians have already been killed by the Burundian armed forces this year.

The majority of these killings, with the exception of the Itaba massacre, have not been condemned by the authorities. Despite hundreds of such killings each year, very few soldiers face trial for human rights violations. In the rare prosecutions that do take place, convicted defendants receive disproportionately light sentences, which are not only insulting but serve to reinforce the impunity of the armed forces. Military courts are neither able nor willing to see justice done. Their inherent weaknesses persist because they are tolerated by the highest authorities.

Worldwide appeals

Colombia

Trade unionists receive death threats

On 18 March, Raquel Galvis received a phone call warning her that if she came across a paramilitary checkpoint she would be killed. The caller identified himself as a member of the AUC, the army-backed paramilitary organization United Self-Defence Groups of Colombia [**trans: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia**]. Raquel Galvis is a member of the Teachers Association of Arauca (ASEDAR) [**trans: Asociación de Educadores de Arauca**].

The next day Jaime Ernesto Carrillo, president of ASEDAR, received a written death threat which said "Take care of your children or you won't see them again". [**trans. "Cuide a sus hijos o no los volverá a ver"**] The death threat was pushed under the door of his house and was brought to his attention as he attended a meeting with AI delegates. There have been a series of paramilitary death threats against trade unionists, peasant farmer leaders and human rights defenders in the department of Arauca in recent months.

The most recent threats follow mass arrests and detentions in November 2002 in the municipality of Saravena when around 2,000 people were rounded up by the security forces and forced into the local sports stadium where they were questioned before being released. Eighty-five people, including trade unionists, civic and youth leaders were detained. They were reportedly filmed and paraded before the press as members of the armed opposition groups, the ELN and the FARC. They were prevented from seeing their lawyers until the next day. These and other similar mass arrests carried out in Arauca and other parts of the country in recent months are part of security force operations in which representatives of the Office of the Attorney General have been involved. These agents often sign arrest and search warrants in situ, relying on the suspicions of the security forces or informers and not on the basis of legal investigations.

AI is concerned that trade unionists and other human rights defenders in the department of Arauca are facing a coordinated military-paramilitary strategy to label them and their organizations as subversive, thereby exposing them to arbitrary judicial proceedings and risk of violent attack by paramilitary groups.

Please write, expressing fear for the safety of ASEDAR and other trade unionists and human rights defenders in Arauca and calling on the government to take decisive action to guarantee their safety.

Send appeals to: Señor Presidente Álvaro Uribe Vélez, Presidente de la República, Palacio de Nariño, Carrera 8 No.7-26, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia. Fax: + 57 1 342 0592

Israel/Occupied Territories

Woman held in administrative detention denied medical care

Asma Muhammad Suleiman Saba'neh, a 40-year-old resident of Jenin refugee camp and mother of six children, was arrested by the Israeli army on 11 February 2003 and placed in administrative detention without charge.

She has a history of brain tumours and her recent symptoms raise concerns about a possible recurrence of a tumour or other serious condition. Asma Saba'neh was diagnosed and treated for a brain tumour almost 10 years ago. The tumour was removed but within five years a tumour was again detected in the same location and she had further surgery.

Until the beginning of this year, Asma Saba'neh was symptom-free but then began to suffer from severe headaches and oedema. No diagnosis could be made by X-ray examination and her doctor recommended a CT-scan. However, between the doctor's

recommendation and her appointment for a scan, she was arrested and issued with a three-month administrative detention order, which expires on 11 May but which may be renewed. The Israeli army has provided no explanation for her detention, other than that she is considered a “security risk”, the standard formula generally used for administrative detainees.

Administrative detainees can be held indefinitely without charge or trial, on the basis of “secret” evidence, which makes it virtually impossible to challenge the detention order or present a defence. Continued detention is preventing Asma Saba’neh from pursuing the necessary investigation of her medical problem which could be due to a recurrence of a tumour or infection. In either case, prompt investigation and treatment are essential.

Please write, calling for the release of Asma Muhammad Suleiman Saba’neh unless she is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and promptly brought to trial in line with international standards. In addition, call for her to have immediate access to appropriate medical investigation and care as required by her condition.

Send appeals to: The Prime Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, 3 Kaplan Street, PO Box 187, Kiryat Ben Gurion, Jerusalem 91919, Israel.

Fax: +972 2 651 2631. E-mail: pm_eng@pmo.gov.il

Algeria

Teacher ‘disappears’

Teacher Mohamed Briki “disappeared” on 13 November 2002 in Mostaganem, a town in western Algeria. Around 6pm several men wearing plain clothes visited his family. They did not identify themselves but are believed to have been members of the Sécurité militaire, Military Security. They inquired about Mohamed and stayed in the house for more than two hours, during which time they communicated with others via walkie-talkies. They requested that Mohamed Briki present himself for a routine inquiry at the police station.

That evening Mohamed Briki did not return from work and he has not been seen since. The security forces never returned to the family house to inquire about Mohamed Briki and the family is convinced that he was arrested, consistent with similar incidents in their neighbourhood. The security forces deny holding Mohamed Briki or ever having arrested him.

The family filed a complaint against the Military Security, but have had no response regarding the fate of Mohamed Briki. His father, a retired police officer, believes that if Mohamed is still alive he is probably held in secret detention in the Magenta barracks of the Military Security in Oran, where many people who have “disappeared” in the region are believed to have been detained at some point.

Since 1993, particularly between the years 1993 and 1998, thousands of men and women have “disappeared” in Algeria after being arrested by members of the security forces or state-armed militias. The Military Security (more formally known as the Département du renseignement et de la sécurité, Department of Information and Security) are thought to be responsible for many such “disappearances”.

Thousands more Algerians have been abducted by armed groups during the last decade and never seen again. The Algerian authorities have failed to investigate any of these abuses.

Please attach the above photograph of Mohamed Briki to your appeals, inquiring whether he is detained in the Magenta barracks. Stress that if he is in detention he must either be released immediately or charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought before a judge.

Send appeals to: Le Chef d'état major, 2ème Région militaire (Oran), Département du renseignement et de la sécurité, Caserne de Magenta, Oran, Algeria.

Updates

Child released after nearly a year

Alexandre Nzeyimana was 12 years old when he was arrested in April 2002. Although under Burundian law no child under the age of 13 may be detained, he was held in prison for nearly a year without charge. In February this year he was finally released after interventions by both the Association burundaise pour la défense des droits des prisonniers (ABDP), Burundian Association for the Defence of Prisoners' Rights, and AI.

Despite significant improvements, conditions in Burundi's prisons and detention centres are harsh, often severely overcrowded and dangerously insanitary. Mpimba central prison, where Alexandre Nzeyimana was held, officially has capacity for 800 inmates. Currently there are over 2,500, of whom 80 are juveniles. Arrest and detention procedures are frequently not followed, resulting in numerous arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions.

See: Burundi: Poverty, isolation and ill-treatment – juvenile justice in Burundi (AFR 16/011/2002) for further information on the plight of children in detention. (This case is not mentioned in the report.)

Fiji reports to UN Committee

Racial violence has long marred political stability in Fiji, whose indigenous majority population controls government and security forces. After a gap of 18 years, it has resumed its reporting obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Its reports and dialogue with the expert Committee established under the Convention noted the role which human rights law and non-governmental organizations can play in addressing the damage to race relations caused by Fiji's 1987 and 2000 coups.

In March 2003 the Committee acknowledged Fiji's colonial legacy of an economy separating ethnic communities but urged Fiji to "address perceptions that [the government] continues to politicize culture, identity and ethnicity in order to maintain indigenous Fijian hegemony."

AI meets King of Jordan

AI's Secretary General, Irene Khan, met King Abdullah of Jordan (above) during her visit to the country in March. Irene Khan welcomed his call for greater attention to be given to the humanitarian situation inside Iraq. King Abdullah gave assurances that Jordan would provide protection for refugees from Iraq and give access to international organizations. The Secretary General welcomed King Abdullah's commitment that "people must be able to express their views" and his readiness to look into existing legislation, including law 54 of 2001, which has been used to restrict freedom of expression and detain people in Jordan.

AI lobbies EU on behalf of defenders

Across the Caribbean and Latin America, human rights defenders face a wide range of human rights violations, including intimidation, threats, torture, "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions. AI has documented more killings of human rights defenders in this region than in any other. Governments have systematically failed to take

effective action to prevent attacks on defenders or to bring those responsible to justice. In a recent memorandum to the European Union (EU), AI sets out concrete objectives by which the EU can measure compliance with human rights commitments in its agreements with other countries.

Thailand's 'war on drugs'

More than 2,000 people, including elderly people and children as young as 16 months, were killed in Thailand during February and March 2003 in the context of a government campaign, known as the "war on drugs". The authorities maintained that the majority of killings were carried out by drug dealers. They acknowledged that the police killed 46 people in February and March but said that this was in self-defence. However, there is strong suspicion that the security forces were involved in a greater number of killings, and statements made by the authorities appear to endorse the use of lethal force. AI is concerned that there has not been an effective investigation into the killings.

The three-month crack-down on suspected drug dealers and users in Thailand was initiated by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on 1 February. The authorities set target numbers of arrests for local officials to make during the anti-drug campaign and threatened punitive measures if these were not reached.

The use and trafficking of narcotics is a vast problem in Thailand and the use of methamphetamines has risen dramatically in recent years. AI has in the past expressed concern at the killing of suspected drug traffickers by security forces in the country and at the impunity enjoyed by state officials for human rights violations in Thailand. Please write, expressing concern at the high numbers of killings in the context of the "war on drugs". Call for a thorough, effective and independent investigation into killings in the war on drugs, for the findings to be made public, and the suspected perpetrators to be brought to justice. Send appeals to: Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, Office of the Prime Minister, Government House, Pitsanulok Road, Dusit, Bangkok 10300, Thailand. Fax: +66 2 280 1443

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More than 170 Colombian trade unionists murdered last year Viviana María Villamil and Julio Galeano, her husband, were travelling to work one morning in February 2002 on their motorcycle. They were stopped in the street by men on another motorcycle. Julio Galeano was shot dead and Viviana Maria Villamil fled in terror of her life. The couple were active trade unionists involved in campaigning against the privatization of Cali's municipal utilities. Earlier, members of the Colombian armed forces had accused union members of being involved in a "terrorist" plot to destabilize the city. An army-backed paramilitary group had declared members of the union to be legitimate "paramilitary targets".

Death threats against trade unionists continue. On 3 March 2003, at least two calls were made to the municipal workers' trade union SINTRAEMCALI. In one, the caller said: "Listen, we are going to kill all of these leaders sons of bitches, and this time it is serious".

Organizing to improve the lot of fellow workers is often risky. But in most countries, those who take a lead in seeking decent wages and conditions may at most risk their promotion prospects or their livelihoods – not their lives. In Colombia, however, being a prominent trade union member is very dangerous indeed.

The CUT, Colombia's Trade Union Congress, recorded the murders of 172 affiliated members in Colombia during 2002. Of the 172 trade unionists killed, 49 were trade union leaders. These were not the only trade unionists who suffered because of their organizing activities. During 2002, 26 were abducted, and 17 suffered an abduction attempt. A further 164 received death threats and 132 were arbitrarily detained by the authorities.

Many trade unionists have been forced to leave their homes: seven were forcibly displaced in 2002, and around 80 went into exile.

Among trade unionists particularly targeted are public sector unions and unions representing workers in strategic sectors of the country's economy including oil, mining and energy.

According to the CUT, these human rights violations are a direct consequence of trade union activity. The majority of attacks against trade unionists have been carried out by paramilitary groups, often acting with the active or tacit support of the Colombian armed forces.

There have been few investigations into cases of violations against trade unionists. Fewer individuals still have been brought to justice for these crimes. The Colombian government has failed to take decisive action to dismantle the army-backed paramilitary groups responsible for the majority of human rights violations against trade unionists and to ensure that those responsible for human rights violations against trade unionists are brought to justice.

As part of its 1 May International Labour Day Action AI is focusing on human rights violations against trade unionists in Colombia.

Backlash against human rights in the shadow of war in Iraq

Since the start of the war in Iraq on 20 March, a backlash against certain human rights has been witnessed around the world. These include attacks on the rights to freedom of expression and assembly; excessive use of force by police against anti-war demonstrators; and restriction of asylum rights.

With the spotlight focused on the theatre of war, such abuses of human rights were largely ignored. AI urges all governments to respect the right of people to express peacefully their opinions, and to refrain from using the war in Iraq as a pretext for curtailing or abusing fundamental human rights.

Freedom of expression and assembly

In many countries, the authorities have sought to prevent people from holding peaceful public demonstrations and have harassed journalists, lawyers, government opponents and anti-war activists.

Belgium: Since early March, police have placed more than 450 anti-war demonstrators under administrative arrest, a form of "preventive" detention lasting up to 12 hours.

Egypt: Hundreds of people associated with the anti-war movement, including lawyers, journalists, MPs, academics and students, have been arrested since 20 March and some have reportedly been tortured.

Jordan: At least 17 anti-war activists, including Fawaz Zurayqat, station manager of Arab Television, have been arrested. They are all believed to be held in incommunicado detention.

United Kingdom: Buses were prevented from approaching a US airbase on the grounds that the passengers might breach the peace.

USA: Thousands of people demonstrated against the war in cities across the USA in March, with many arrests for alleged public order offences. In Chicago more than 500

people were arrested after demonstrators blocked a major city artery on 20 March. There were allegations that some non-resisting demonstrators were beaten by police. Excessive use of force by police

Since 20 March, millions of people around the world have taken to the streets to protest against the war on Iraq. Some demonstrations have turned violent or have involved clashes with the police; others have been peaceful. In both situations and in many countries, police have reportedly used excessive force against demonstrators.

Egypt: Dozens of anti-war activists have been beaten severely and hundreds injured by police using water

cannons, clubs and dogs against demonstrators.

Germany: Police reportedly used water cannons and batons to clear several hundred protesters, many of them teenagers, who refused to disperse from outside the US Consulate after a demonstration.

Greece: In response to massive anti-war demonstrations in several towns riot police reportedly ill-treated

protesters. After a demonstration on 21 March, anti-riot police reportedly beat Iraqi immigrants and took 38

of them away to check their identities. All were released, but three were kept in hospital for treatment.

Spain: Up to 178 people were reportedly injured, some seriously, as a result of police action during peace rallies in Madrid on 21 and 22 March. More than 30 formal complaints of police ill-treatment were lodged with the courts.

Sudan: Three students were reported to have been killed during several demonstrations in Khartoum, some of which turned violent. The police accepted responsibility for the death on 22 March of a student protester.

Turkey: Riot police reportedly beat demonstrators during anti-war protests including in Nusaybin and Adana, Istanbul and Ankara.

Yemen: An 11-year-old child and two protesters were shot dead during violent clashes between police and thousands of anti-war demonstrators in Sana'a on 21 March.

Restriction of asylum rights

In many parts of the world, asylum rights are being restricted or abused by states unwilling to comply fully with their international obligations to protect people fleeing their homes in fear of their lives.

In the USA, "Operation Liberty Shield" mandates the detention of asylum-seekers from Iraq and at least

33 other countries. AI believes that the mandatory detention of the group of asylum-seekers targeted by "Operation Liberty Shield" is a clear breach of inter-national legal standards, which prohibits detention that is arbitrary and unlawful.

Several European countries, including Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the UK have frozen decisions on most Iraqi asylum claims. AI is concerned about the adverse impact of such policies on individual asylum-seekers, arising from the uncertainty of their status.