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## **NATO halts Afghanistan detainee transfers after torture claims**

NATO's decision to suspend transferring detainees to Afghan forces due to reports of systematic torture highlights the international community's failure to provide for basic rule of law in Afghanistan, Amnesty International said today.

The decision was announced on Tuesday after a leaked UN report detailed systematic torture at some government-run detention centres.

Amnesty International has consistently called on the NATO-led ISAF forces to end transfers to facilities run by the Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS), where torture and other ill-treatment have long been reported.

"Amnesty International warned ISAF of these problems years ago, but instead of fixing the problem, ISAF allowed things deteriorate until the situation became intolerable. ISAF governments should explain how they allowed the situation to get completely out of hand,," said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Director.

"Given the major problems with the lack of legal protection for detainees in US custody in particular, NATO must clarify how it intends to handle detainees, since NATO countries do not operate large detention centers in Afghanistan," Sam Zarifi said.

NATO has said the suspension involves facilities including police-run prisons in Kunduz and Tarin Kowt as well as NDS-run prisons in Herat, Khost, Lagman, Kapisa and Takhar and a counter-terrorism facility known as Department 124.

According to the UN report, detainees at those sites were regularly beaten with rubber hoses and threatened with sexual assault. Many of those targeted were suspected of being insurgents.

A spokesperson for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), told the media the UN had already handed over its findings to the Afghan government, which is taking the matter "very seriously."

NATO officials have said they will investigate the torture claims.

ISAF forces are due to be withdrawn from Afghanistan over the coming years, giving national authorities responsibility for providing for the security of Afghans.

"Any security handover must be contingent on the authorities in Afghanistan meeting basic benchmarks for human rights and the rule of law," said Sam Zarifi.

"Before international forces leave, ISAF and the international community must help reform Afghanistan's prison system to ensure that detainees' human rights are respected. Afghan authorities must thoroughly

investigate any allegations of arbitrary detentions and torture in custody, especially at NDS facilities, and bring those responsible to justice.”

Amnesty International called on NATO to grant detainees in its custody in Afghanistan adequate access to lawyers and their families, as well as any medical treatment or consular assistance where needed.

“In areas of Afghanistan controlled by the Taleban and other insurgent groups, detainees regularly face horrific abuses. But Afghans are now asking how it is that their government, with all the international support it receives, has also resorted to torture and ill-treatment of prisoners,” said Sam Zarifi.