

URGENT ACTION

CAMP RESIDENTS BEATEN AND TORTURED

Thirty-six Iranians detained in Iraq are being held at a police station. Iraqi security forces detained the Iranians when they forcibly seized control of Camp Ashraf. Most are reported to have been beaten and tortured after their arrest and at least seven need urgent medical care. They are said to be on hunger strike in protest against their detention and treatment.

On 28 July 2009, Iraqi security forces stormed Camp Ashraf, about 60km north-east of Baghdad, home to about 3,500 members of the People's Mojahedeen Organization of Iran (PMOI), an Iranian opposition group which has been based in Iraq since 1986. Thirty-six camp residents were detained and taken to a police station which the Iraqi security forces had set up inside the camp. The detainees were held there for an hour during which they are reported to have been tortured and beaten, before being transferred to a police station in the town of al-Khalis, about 25 km south of Camp Ashraf.

Seven of these detainees are said to be in need of medical treatment. Mehraban Balai sustained a broken arm after being beaten by Iraqi security forces and a gunshot injury to his leg; Habib Ghorab is said to suffer from internal bleeding, and Ezat Latifi has serious chest pain after he was apparently run over by one of the military vehicles used by Iraqi forces in seizing control of the camp. The detainees have been asked to sign documents written in Arabic but have refused to do so. They have also sought access to lawyers but so far unsuccessfully. All 36 detainees remain at risk of being forcibly returned to Iran where it is feared that all or some of them could be at risk of torture or execution.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 September 2009 in English, Arabic or your own language:

- Expressing concern that 36 Camp Ashraf residents under arrest have been beaten and tortured and that at least seven of them are in need of medical treatment;
- urging the authorities to investigate all allegations of torture and beatings, and to bring perpetrators to justice;
- calling on the authorities to provide appropriate medical care to the detainees;
- calling on the authorities to release the detainees unless they are to be promptly charged with a recognizable offence and brought to trial according to international standards for fair trial;
- urging the authorities not to forcibly return any Camp Ashraf resident or other Iranians to Iran, where they would be at risk of torture and other serious human rights violations.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS via the Iraqi embassy or diplomatic representative in your country, asking them to forward your appeals to:

President

Jalal Talabani

Salutation: Your Excellency

Prime Minister

Nuri Kamil al-Maliki

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Human Rights

Wajdan Mikhail Salam

Email: minister@humanrights.gov.iq

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The PMOI is a political organization that opposed and fought against governments appointed by the last Shah of Iran, and in 1979 took part in the fighting in Iran that became known as the Islamic Revolution, which ended in the creation of Iran's present system of government

Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein invited the PMOI to establish itself in Iraq in 1986 during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) war, and afforded the PMOI his protection. In 1988, from their base at Camp Ashraf, the PMOI attempted to invade Iran. The Iranian authorities summarily executed hundreds, if not thousands, of PMOI detainees in an event known in Iran as the "prison massacres".

Following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the PMOI members disarmed and were accorded "protected persons" status under the Fourth Geneva Convention. However, this lapsed in 2009, when the Iraqi government started to exercise control of Iraq's internal affairs as stipulated for by the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), a security agreement between Iraq and the US signed in November 2008 and which entered into force on 1 January this year.

US forces in Iraq provided effective protection for Camp Ashraf until mid-2009, after which they completed their withdrawal to their bases from all Iraqi towns and cities.

After they disarmed, the PMOI announced that they had renounced violence. There is no evidence that the PMOI has continued to engage in armed opposition to the Iranian government, though people associated with the PMOI still face human rights violations in Iran.

Since mid-2008 the Iraqi government has repeatedly indicated that it wants to close Camp Ashraf, and that residents should leave Iraq or face being forcibly expelled from the country.

At least eight Camp Ashraf residents were killed and many more injured when Iraqi security forces stormed the camp on 28 July 2009. Iraqi government spokesperson, Ali al-Dabbagh, acknowledged that seven camp residents were killed but claimed that "five of them threw themselves in front of Iraqi police vehicles" and two others were shot by other camp residents when they sought to leave. However, camp residents have strongly refuted this, asserting that those shot were killed by Iraqi security forces, and video footage seen by Amnesty International indicates that other deaths and injuries were caused by Iraqi forces driving vehicles into protesting residents of the camp.

UA: 212/09 Index: MDE 14/014/2009 Issue Date: 07 August 2009

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