

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Iraq: Amnesty International urges the Iraqi government to invite international experts to probe recent torture allegations

Amnesty International calls upon the Iraqi authorities to invite international experts to join the ongoing investigations into allegations of torture by Iraqi security forces. The organisation is deeply concerned by the discovery on Sunday, 11 December of detainees who have been abused at a detention cell operated by the Iraqi Interior Ministry, holding 625 prisoners – at least 13 of whom had allegedly been exposed to abuse so severe as to require medical treatment.

“Human rights experts should be invited either to participate or to monitor the investigation into these cases, as well as the whole pattern of torture”, says Amnesty International. “The investigation must be seen to be independent and impartial”.

The discovery of the prisoners at the Rusafa Prison is part of an ongoing investigation of detention centres under Iraqi control. Ministry of Justice officials who took part in the investigation reviewed the cases of some of these detainees, and ordered the release of 56 shortly thereafter. Government spokesman Laith Kubba said the same day that a further investigation into the torture allegations would be conducted.

Amnesty International believes that the reports of the investigation should be published in full, as soon as possible, and any officials found responsible for ordering, perpetrating or acquiescing in the use of torture should be brought to justice promptly and fairly.

The Iraqi authorities should also ensure that all necessary medical, including psychiatric assistance or counselling, is available to detainees who were tortured or ill-treated and may be traumatised as a result of their ordeal, and also provide appropriate compensation.

Furthermore, Amnesty International calls on the Iraqi government and the MNF to take urgent action to ensure that there is a central registry established of all persons in detention. They must provide details of any detentions for which they are responsible to such registry very speedily - ie within 24 hours - so that relatives and others can have early recourse to information about detainees, including the reasons for their detention and place of custody.

Background

Amnesty International has received many reports of torture and ill-treatment of detainees by Iraqi government forces, including both the Iraqi police and special forces belonging to the Ministry of the Interior, such as the Wolf Brigade. Most of the victims are believed to be Sunni Arabs, detained as suspected anti-government insurgents.

Torture takes place in the Ministry of the Interior building as well as other buildings of the same ministry in

several districts of Baghdad. On 15 November US forces discovered some 173 detainees at a secret bunker in the Ministry building in Baghdad. The detainees appeared to have been tortured, brutally ill-treated and starved. Iraq Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'afari announced the same day that he had ordered an investigation into the allegations. The committee conducting the investigations is headed by Deputy Prime Minister Rozh Nuri Shawes and has so far refused to disclose its findings.

This week's torture allegations however, appear to have been more severe.