

PUBLIC

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Incommunicado detention/Fear of torture

28 May 2004

IRAQ/USA

**Mohammad Jassem 'Abd al-'Issawi (m), civil engineer, aged 43
Scores of other detainees**

Mohammad Jassem 'Abd al-'Issawi has reportedly been detained incommunicado in Abu Ghraib prison, near Baghdad, since December 2003. Amnesty International is concerned that he may be tortured or subjected to other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Scores of other detainees are believed to be held incommunicado in the prison, and they too are at risk of torture.

US soldiers took Mohammad Jassem 'Abd al-'Issawi from his house in Baghdad on 17 December 2003, and reportedly kicked and punched him. His family only recently discovered where he was, when former detainees told them that he was held in the High Security section of Abu Ghraib. It is not known exactly why he has been detained but, according to his relatives, US forces may have suspected him of activities against the Coalition (mainly US and UK forces now operating in Iraq). His relatives say he was not involved in any such activities.

Since his arrest Mohammad Jassem 'Abd al-'Issawi has not had access to his family, lawyers or the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Under the Fourth Geneva Convention, ICRC delegates must be granted access to places of detention in occupied countries, such as Abu Ghraib, and allowed to interview detainees.

Mohammad Jassem 'Abd al-'Issawi was involved in an Iraqi students' movement in the early 1980s, and fled the country in 1986 during a clampdown by the authorities. He lived as an asylum seeker in Syria, Pakistan and Iran. He returned to Iraq in 1989 after a presidential amnesty and remained there.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Approximately 3,000 prisoners of the Coalition now remain in Abu Ghraib: some 600 were due to be released on 28 April and 450 were freed a week earlier. Since April 2004, photographs of US agents torturing and abusing Iraqi detainees in Abu Ghraib, both mentally and physically, have been published around the world. One US soldier has appeared before a military court in Baghdad and received the maximum sentence of one year's imprisonment, after admitting his involvement in torturing Iraqi detainees. Several others are awaiting trial.

Amnesty International has documented cases of torture and ill-treatment of detainees in Iraq and raised its concerns with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) as well as the US and UK governments. Detainees were forced to lie face down on the ground, handcuffed, hooded or blindfolded during arrest. During interrogation they were reportedly repeatedly beaten and restrained for prolonged periods in painful positions, while some were also subjected to sleep deprivation, prolonged forced standing, and exposed to loud music and bright lights to disorient them. Some died in custody allegedly as a result of torture.

On 7 May 2004 Amnesty International sent an open letter to US President George W. Bush, saying that abuses committed by US agents in Abu Ghraib prison were war crimes. The organization called on the US administration to fully investigate these abuses and to ensure that there was no impunity for anyone found responsible, regardless of position or rank. (See the full text of the letter at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR510782004?open&of=ENG-IRQ>)

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern that Mohammad Jassem 'Abd al-'Issawi has been detained incommunicado in Abu Ghraib prison since 17 December 2003;
- asking why he has been detained, and urging the authorities to release him immediately if he is being held solely for his conscientiously held beliefs and has not used or advocated violence;
- seeking assurances that he is being treated humanely, and urging the authorities to grant him access to his family, lawyers of his own choosing, the ICRC and any medical care he may need;
- expressing concern that detainees in Abu Ghraib prison have been tortured and ill-treated, and calling for independent investigations into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment, with the results made public;
- urging that such investigations include not only those who carry out the abuses, but also those higher up the chain of command.

APPEALS TO:

George W Bush, President
The White House, Office of the President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington DC 20500, USA

Fax: +1 202 456 2461

Email: **President@whitehouse.gov (Please note that this address has been responding erratically and is occasionally unavailable. If so, please visit the following webpage to submit your appeal: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/webmail>)**

Salutation: **Dear Mr President**

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
Office of the Secretary
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301, USA

Fax: +1 703 697 8339

Email: **please send e-mails from the website (www.defenselink.mil)**

Salutation: **Dear Secretary of Defence**

The Honorable Colin Powell
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington DC 20520
USA

Fax: +1 202 261 8577

Salutation: **Dear Secretary of State**

Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III
Presidential Envoy to Iraq
Office of the Coalition Provisional Authority
Office of the Secretary of Defence
The Pentagon
Washington DC, 20301-2400
USA

Email: **bremerp@orha.centcom.mil**

Salutation: **Dear Ambassador Bremer**

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 July 2004.