

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Note to Editors

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### Concerns with the new security arrangement in Iraq

As the Iraqi parliament holds its vote on the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) -- the plan by which the US would withdraw all its troops from the country by the end of 2011 -- Amnesty International would like to voice its concerns with the agreement as it currently stands. Those concerns include:

The agreement provides for thousands of mostly untried detainees held by the US military in Iraq to be handed to the Iraqi authorities to decide on their fate without any guarantees as to their human rights. Many of the detainees are former Ba'ath party officials and are unlikely to be released. They will be at risk of further human rights violations, including torture by the Iraqi security forces. Amnesty International continues to receive persistent reports of torture and other ill-treatment of people detained by Iraqi forces. Some of the detainees who are expected to be handed over from the US to Iraqi custody have already been held without charge or trial for several years, without being informed in detail as to the reasons for their incarceration or being allowed any means to challenge it before the courts or some other independent body.

The agreement does not adequately address the longstanding problem of impunity for private military and security contractors. Those contracted to the US Department of Defence will lose their immunity but the agreement is silent as regards other contractors employed by the US State Department or other US agencies, who include some who have previously been accused of serious human rights abuses.

The agreement gives Iraq the right to detain and try US soldiers for certain crimes committed while they are off their base and off-duty, but without specifying what these crimes are and without ensuring that any such arrests and detentions must comply with international human rights standards and not just Iraqi law, which is still flawed. As well, the agreement leaves it to the US authorities to determine when their soldiers were acting under "duty status."

For more information, or to arrange an interview, please contact Nicole Choueiry, Amnesty International press officer on 07831 640 170.