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UNITED KINGDOM  
@AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES NATIONAL SECURITY DETENTION  
PROCEDURES, INVESTIGATES POSSIBLE PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

Amnesty International said today (Friday 1 February) that some of the 50 Iraqis and Palestinians detained in the United Kingdom pending deportation for national security reasons may be prisoners of conscience and that their detention without a fair hearing breaches international law.

In a letter to the UK government, the human rights organization said the in camera hearings - scheduled to begin today - do not guarantee "that no one will be labelled unfairly as a security risk or 'terrorist'".

The people arrested have not been told the specific reason for their arrest - and may not even be told at their hearing before a non-judicial panel - leading to concern that some may have been singled out on the basis of inaccurate or misinterpreted information.

Under UK law, the government does not have to give specific reasons why detainees are considered a threat to national security. International treaties and standards, however, require that anyone who is detained must be told the specific reasons for the detention and must have the right to challenge this before a court, with legal representation.

The organization said it is concerned that some of the people may have been detained because of their non-violent political views or activities and/or their nationality, and not because they are genuine security risks. A number of those cases are being investigated by Amnesty International to determine if they are prisoners of conscience.

In the hearings to review whether they are national security risks the detainees are not allowed to have a lawyer present or to cross examine evidence against them, and the recommendations of the hearing panel are secret and not binding on the government.

Amnesty International said it is also concerned about the proposal for summary expulsion of those people seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. It is also concerned about others like them who would be at risk of imprisonment as prisoners of conscience, torture, "disappearance" or extrajudicial executions if they were sent back to their country of origin or to a country which could not guarantee effective protection against forcible return to a country where they are at risk.

**EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT FRIDAY 1 FEBRUARY 1991**