

PUBLIC

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21 March 2007

Further Information on UA 44/07 (MDE 14/011/2007, 23 February 2007) Incommunicado detention/fear of torture or ill-treatment

IRAQ

Scores of women and children

Released:

Iqbal Ibtissam (f), aged in her 30s
Amal Ibtissam (f), aged in her 30s, her sister
Amal Ibtissam's baby daughter

Amnesty International has learnt that sisters Iqbal and Amal Ibtissam, along with Amal Ibtissam's baby daughter, were released without charge on 19 March. A total of 35 women, and their children, have reportedly been freed but an unknown number of women and children are said to remain held incommunicado in a makeshift detention centre, formerly a school, in an area called Hay al-Ansar in the city of Najaf, south of Baghdad. There is still no information about the conditions in which they are held.

On 29 January 2007, Iraqi security forces, supported by US forces and pro-government militias, launched a massive attack in al-Zarqa, a rural area near Najaf. Some 300 armed men, members of a religious group calling itself *Jund al-Sama* (Soldiers of Heaven), were reportedly killed in the attack. They were said to have been plotting to kill senior Shi'a religious clerics based in Najaf. In the aftermath of the attack, Iraqi security forces and pro-government militias reportedly raided the houses of members of *Jund al-Sama* and surrounding houses, and arrested scores of women and children. Among those arrested were Iqbal and Amal Ibtissam, and Amal Ibtissam's baby daughter.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Armed men belonging to *Jund al-Sama* were said to have been planning to kill senior Shi'a religious clerics to coincide with the Shi'a festival of *Ashura*, which commemorates the death of Imam al-Hussain in the seventh century. Najaf is one of the Shi'a holiest cities, and senior Shi'a clerics, including Grand Ayatollah 'Ali al-Sistani, are based there.

Iraq is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 9 of which states that "Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law." It is also a state party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Article 37 of which states that "No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily... every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age."

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

- welcoming the release of Iqbal Ibtissam and Amal Ibtissam, and Amal Ibtissam's baby daughter, as well as other women and children;
- expressing concern that an unknown number of women and children reportedly remain held incommunicado in Hay al-Ansar in Najaf and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment;
- seeking clarification of the reasons for their arrest as well as details of any legal proceedings against them;
- urging for them to be released immediately if they are not to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

APPEALS TO: Email addresses for the Iraqi authorities are proving unreliable. If there is no email address given, or if your email bounces, please send appeals to the authorities 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

E-mail: iraqigov@yahoo.com

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Hashim al-Shibli

E-mail: minister@iraqi-justice.org

deputy@iraqi-justice.org

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hoshyar Zebari

E-mail: press@iraqmofa.net

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Iraq accredited to your country. Ask them to send copies to the Human Rights Minister, Wajdan Mikhail.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 May 2007.