

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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Iraq: Amnesty International Daily Digest - March 24 2003

Humanitarian needs of civilians must be met

Amnesty International today lent its voice to concerns expressed by the International Committee of the Red Cross at the plight of civilians in Basra, in Southern Iraq, who have been without water since Friday afternoon. Basra has been under fire by the USA and its allied forces for the last three days.

"We are concerned that the situation in Basra may be mirrored in other cities and regions in Iraq. Military authorities have a responsibility to carefully assess the implications on civilians of any object that they target. All parties to the conflict in Iraq have a responsibility to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the civilian population are fully met."

"With the escalation of military activity in Iraq it is vital that the health and safety of ordinary civilians is given increasing consideration," Amnesty International said.

Both the Iraqi authorities and the military authorities of the USA and its allies must facilitate access and the operations of humanitarian organizations.

Respect for all POWs

Amnesty International called on the Iraqi, US and UK authorities to treat all prisoners of war in full conformity with the Third Geneva Convention. They should not be subjected to any form of torture or ill-treatment and should be given immediate access to the International Committee of the Red Cross. All prisoners of war are entitled to these provisions. Amnesty International also calls on all media to ensure in its use of images that the dignity of all prisoners of war, whether Iraqi or US or other, is respected.

Cluster bombs

Amnesty International is still waiting for assurances, and a response from the governments of the USA and the UK, that they will refrain from using cluster bombs in civilian areas. The organization is also demanding that safeguards be taken to protect civilians during aerial bombardments from the USA and UK governments.

UN Commission on Human Rights -- Special Sitting on Iraq

Amnesty International today welcomed the proposal for the UN Commission on Human Rights to hold a Special Sitting on Iraq. The organization believes that this Special Sitting would provide an opportunity for an in-depth discussion of the broad human rights situation in that country, including in relation to the current conflict and its aftermath.

Public Document

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