

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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Freedom of expression

Anti-war demonstrations have seen a wave of arrests, detentions and subsequent ill-treatment in many parts of the world.

Amnesty International yesterday launched an urgent action, following the detention of two lawyers in Egypt, after anti-war demonstrations. Manal Ahmad Mustafa Khalid and Ziyad 'Abd al-Hamid al'Uleimi were allegedly beaten by security forces. Despite both lawyers being injured, medical attention has so far been denied.

Many others were injured by security personnel at the demonstration, who used water cannon and clubs against the protesters. While most of the hundreds of people detained in the context of anti-war demonstrations have been released, at least 62 have been issued with detention orders of between four and 15 days.

No double standards for POWs

Amnesty International today reiterated its call on all sides of the conflict to treat prisoners of war (POWs) in full conformity with the Third Geneva Convention.

"They should be treated humanely and 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. We demand that the governments of Iraq, US and the UK to respect the laws of war," Amnesty International said.

On 23 March, President George Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair accused Iraq of breaching the Geneva Convention, after showing images of captured US soldiers being interrogated on television. They demanded fair treatment for the POWs.

Amnesty International recalled that the same principle applies to Iraqi prisoners of war. Iraqi officials stated that they will respect the Geneva Convention.

On the same day, about 30 more detainees were flown from Afghanistan to the US Naval Base in Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, bringing to around 660 the number of foreign nationals from approximately 40 countries held in the base.

"Despite many requests, we are still denied access to Bagram and Guantánamo Bay prisons and once again we call upon US government to address Amnesty International's concerns about the detainees," the organization added.

Humanitarian needs of civilians must be met

Amnesty International continued to lend its voice to concerns expressed by the International Committee of the Red Cross, and UNICEF at the plight of civilians in Basra, in Southern Iraq, who have been without water since Friday afternoon. Basra, a city of 2 million has been under siege and under fire by the USA and its allied forces for the last four days.

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

Public Document

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