

**The Wire**

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## **Homes turned to rubble**

### **Thousands made homeless as Palestinian houses are destroyed**

It was the middle of the night when Hana 'Ajluni heard Israeli soldiers ordering the inhabitants of her building in Hebron to leave. She wrapped up her two-month-old baby, woke up her four other children and hurriedly followed her neighbours down to the street. They had no time to take any of their belongings. Later the soldiers blew up the eight-storey apartment building. Hana, her children and her neighbours became homeless overnight — 68 people in all, including 53 women and children.

Destruction of Palestinian homes and property by the Israeli security forces has reached unprecedented levels in the past three and a half years. More than 3,000 homes, hundreds of factories and other properties, and vast areas of agricultural land, have been destroyed. As a result, tens of thousands of Palestinian men, women and children have been made homeless or have lost their livelihood. Tens of thousands of others live in fear of homelessness as their houses have been damaged or are under threat of demolition.

House demolitions are usually carried out without warning, often at night. For many families, the only warning of the impending destruction is the approaching rumble of the Israeli army's bulldozers or the sound of walls being smashed down. Often the families are forcibly evicted by soldiers without even being given time to collect up their belongings.

In some cases the destruction of homes has even resulted in the deaths of their inhabitants. Noha Maqadmeh, nine months pregnant and the mother of 10 children, was asleep in her home in al-Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip when she was crushed to death under the rubble as her home collapsed when Israeli soldiers blew up a neighbour's house. Her husband and most of her children were injured, some seriously. Six nearby houses were also destroyed by the blast that night of 3 March 2003, leaving some 90 people homeless.

In most cases the justification given by the Israeli authorities for the destruction is "military/security needs". This includes punitive demolitions of houses belonging to families of Palestinians known or suspected of involvement in suicide bombing or other attacks against Israelis.

In other cases the justification given is the lack of a building permit. At the root of such demolitions are land and planning policies that discriminate against Israeli Arabs and Palestinians. Hundreds of "unlicensed" Palestinian homes have been demolished, whereas demolitions of homes in the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories or in the Jewish sector in Israel are virtually unheard of.

Salim and 'Arabia Shawamreh, whose house was demolished four times between July 1998 and April 2003, told AI what happened when they tried to get a permit to build a home on their land in the village of 'Anata near Jerusalem.

"The authorities gave us different justifications for refusing us the building permit. Each time we succeeded to challenge or disprove the reason they had given us for the refusal, our application

was rejected on different grounds. We spent thousands of dollars on this process and in the end we understood that it was hopeless and we built our home without a permit.”

Vast areas of agricultural land have been bulldozed by the Israeli army, also on grounds of “military/security needs”, including to make way for a security fence/wall in the West Bank, destroying a key means of subsistence for vast numbers of already impoverished Palestinians. The uprooting of hundreds of thousands of olive, citrus, and other trees, and the razing to the ground of shops, workshops and factories will have severe economic repercussions for years to come.

In the Occupied Territories, the destruction of Palestinian property and agricultural land is linked to Israel’s long-standing policy of appropriating as much of the land it occupies as possible, notably by establishing Israeli settlements in violation of international law.

In Israel, the demolition of homes in the Arab sector is linked to the state’s policy of large-scale confiscation of land, restrictive planning regulations and discriminatory policies in the allocation of state land, which make it difficult or impossible for Israeli Arabs to obtain building permits.

Whatever Israel’s justifications for the destruction, the result is the same – thousands of families left homeless and destitute, forced to rely on relatives, friends and humanitarian organizations for shelter and subsistence.

For further information, see *Israel and the Occupied Territories: Under the rubble – House demolition and destruction of land and property* (MDE 15/033/2004).

### **Mental health care tragedy in Romania**

Eighteen people died in one psychiatric hospital in Poiana Mare, Romania, in January and February 2004, apparently mostly from malnutrition and hypothermia. The deaths highlight a profound failure of the mental health care system in Romania in which patients – many kept against their wishes – are held in deplorable, sometimes fatal, conditions.

In November 2003, an AI representative visited a number of psychiatric hospitals in the country. At a closed male psychiatric ward in the Obregia Hospital in Bucharest he was told by the doctor in charge that none of the patients were being treated on an involuntary basis. She said that many of the people who are brought to the ward in Obregia

initially refuse to be admitted but are "persuaded" that it is in their best interest and subsequently sign a consent form. However, some people complained to AI that they would like to leave the hospital but were not allowed to. The Law on Mental Health, which prescribes a procedure for placement for involuntary treatment, is apparently not being enforced because the government has failed to adopt regulations for its implementation. One young man had been brought to the hospital by the police and described as homeless following his release from an orphanage where he had been brought up. He was reported not to suffer from any mental health problems and was not receiving any medication.

The Obregia hospital in Bucharest is one of the best in the country but AI found that in many psychiatric wards and hospitals the conditions were appalling. Food provided for patients was usually of very poor quality and not nutritious. Inadequate heating was in many institutions a chronic problem. Patients and residents took showers in poor facilities, usually only once a week. Toilets frequently did not work properly and were often not appropriate for people with disabilities. Overcrowding in some institutions resulted in patients having to share beds. In some instances patients shared beds as this was the only way to keep warm in unheated wards.

In the women's psychiatric ward of the Tarnaveni general hospital, patients did not have access to basic toiletries. Many patients walked around scantily clothed or naked and very few had shoes. In one section, because of a shortage of adequate bedding, patients were sometimes huddled three to a bed.

In 2003 at least four patients in psychiatric hospitals died following assaults by other patients, reportedly in circumstances in which patients had not been adequately supervised by staff.

In its memorandum to the government AI called for a thorough and effective reform of the mental health care services in Romania. The government immediately claimed that the organization's findings were exaggerated and even inaccurate. AI replied in detail to accusations that it has misinformed the public. Subsequently, the Minister of Health stated that he would invite representatives of AI to Bucharest to discuss the situation in psychiatric hospitals.

For further information, see *Romania: Memorandum to the government concerning inpatient psychiatric treatment* (EUR 39/003/2004) and *The Romanian government fails to acknowledge the human tragedy unfolding in psychiatric hospitals* (EUR 39/005/2004).

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### **Arms and the new European Union**

Europe was abuzz on 1 May when 10 new members – Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia – joined the European Union (EU). This expansion of the EU is an opportunity to implement effective EU mechanisms on arms control, to help protect human rights and ensure respect for international humanitarian law.

The major EU arms exporting countries – France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom (UK) – accounted for one third of the worldwide arms transfer agreements between 1994 and 2001. Some of the new member states have significant arms production and exporting activities. For example, the enlarged EU now has over 400 companies in 23 countries producing small arms and light weapons – only slightly fewer than the USA.

The accession of the 10 new states is probably not the end of the extension of the EU. Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey are all in various stages of negotiation with the EU over possible accession; all three have a record of poor arms control policy and practice.

The EU has a Code of Conduct on arms exports, established in 1998 to lay down common standards in controlling arms transfers, and prevent exports which could be used for internal repression or international aggression, or would contribute to regional instability.

But the design and application of the EU Code are deeply flawed. There are numerous reports of exports of military, security and police equipment, technology and expertise from EU member states which have been transferred – mostly in secret – to recipients who have used such items for grave human rights violations or breaches of international humanitarian law.

For example, despite reports of extrajudicial executions, “disappearances”, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and ill-treatment and deaths in detention in Togo, France continues to provide the country with military assistance.

Similarly, the UK remains the principal provider of external assistance, including firearms training, to the Jamaica Constabulary Force, in spite of evidence showing that the Jamaican police routinely carry out extrajudicial executions.

The 15 EU member states promised at the end of 2003 to review the EU Code during 2004. AI welcomes this review, but is concerned that it will not allow a thorough analysis of the Code's weaknesses nor sufficient opportunity to address them.

If sufficient time to deal with the weaknesses, loopholes and omissions in the EU Code is not allowed, the Code will continue to allow arms exports that fuel human rights violations to slip through the net, particularly now that the borders of the EU have grown.

AI and many other non-governmental organizations and individuals are calling on all governments, including those of the EU member states, to press for the negotiation of an international arms trade treaty that ensures full respect for international human rights and humanitarian law. Such a legally binding treaty would contain tougher export criteria than the EU Code, which is only politically binding.

For more information, see *Undermining Global Security: the European Union's arms exports* (ACT 30/003/2004) or visit [www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org)

### **Afghanistan: first execution since the Taleban**

On or around 19 April, Abdullah Shah, a military commander from Paghman district, was executed in Kabul on the approval of President Hamid Karzai. It was the first known execution to have taken place in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taleban at the end of 2001.

The President's office did not initially announce the execution, issuing a formal statement only after AI had publicly condemned the act.

In mid 2003, the President's office had reassured AI that although the Afghan penal code authorizes the death penalty, executions would be suspended until the criminal justice system was able to dispense justice in accordance with the country's obligations under international law.

Over the past 12 months, AI has documented many failings of the criminal justice system in Afghanistan. AI delegates who observed part of Abdullah Shah's trial found that it fell far short of international standards for fair trials.

AI fears that Abdullah Shah's execution may have been an attempt by powerful political players to eliminate a key witness to human rights abuses. During his detention, he had reportedly revealed first-hand evidence against several regional commanders against whom no charges have been brought. They are among scores of Afghans implicated in serious crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is believed that several of those accused will be standing for political office in the elections due to be held in September.

Fears remain for those who are currently languishing on "death row", including the two people convicted of the murder of Bettina Goislard, a staff member of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees who was killed in November 2003.

### **'Let us kill him'**

#### **Jamaican singers openly encourage anti-gay violence**

In January 2004, around 30,000 people attended a huge stage show and Rastafarian celebration in St Elizabeth, Jamaica. Some of Jamaica's most celebrated artists were present. Throughout the night, they sang almost exclusively about gay men, urging the audience to "kill dem", chanting "who want to see dem dead put up his hand".

Elephant Man, Bounty Killer, Beenie Man, TOK, and Capleton are among the stars who have written lyrics urging the shooting, burning, rape, stoning and drowning of gay people. Although the singers are Jamaican, their records are widely distributed abroad.

Recently, organizations in Jamaica such as J-FLAG – Jamaica’s only lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) group – have been joined by others around the world to campaign against this incitement to homophobic violence.

Horrific assaults have been committed on members of the LGBT community. Gay men and women have been beaten, cut, burned, raped and shot on account of their sexuality. In the past two years, at least five Jamaicans have been granted asylum in the UK because their lives had been threatened as a result of their sexual identity; others have been granted asylum in the USA and Canada.

One man told J-FLAG how six men from an infamous “garrison community” (poor, inner-city communities dominated by either of Jamaica’s two main political parties) blocked a road to beat a local gay man: “The crowd stood around watching, chanting ‘battyman, battyman, battyman’ [an abusive term for a gay man] before gathering around him as he lay on the sidewalk. The crowd beat, punched and kicked him... Some mothers were actually in tears at what they were witnessing but there was nothing that they could do... The crowd was saying ‘Give him to us! Let us kill him! He’s a battyman!’ ”

The story is typical. Once a person’s sexuality becomes known to family or community, they are at risk. AI has met many people – men and women – who have been forced to leave their areas after being publicly vilified, threatened or attacked on suspicion of being gay. They face homelessness, isolation or worse.

Police protection is often unavailable. In some cases, the police have themselves tortured or ill-treated LGBT victims of crime seeking assistance from the police. Often they fail to investigate homophobic hate-crimes or do not take written or verbal reports of incidents. Police appear to also target health care providers working with the LGBT community and there have been several reports of nurses, social workers and others being unlawfully detained and ill-treated by the police.

The high levels of violent crime – including murder – against gay men and women are exacerbated by the fact that physical intimacy between men, even in private, is a crime under Jamaican law.

As a first step towards ending the violence and discrimination endured by LGBT people in Jamaica, AI wants laws criminalizing sexual conduct between consenting adults of the same sex abolished. Other laws must be introduced and enforced to protect gay men and lesbians from abuse.

The organization is calling for the Prime Minister to initiate a debate on this and to send a strong message that violence against LGBT people is intolerable.

### **Swaziland reaffirms its human rights obligations**

On 26 March 2004 Swaziland signalled a new commitment to observe and promote internationally recognized human rights standards by acceding without reservations to four key human rights instruments: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

These accessions are a welcome development and come at a crucial time. The country has been engaged in a controversial constitutional reform process for the past seven or more years, and the adoption of a new constitution is likely this year, although there remain deep divisions over its content and the process of adoption. However, because of the accessions, it is now all the more necessary that the proposed constitution entrenches human rights standards which Swaziland is obliged to promote, protect and fulfil under international human rights law.

AI sees Swaziland's ratification of these key human rights instruments, and of CEDAW in particular, as an important step towards the promotion and protection of the rights of women in Swaziland. As part of AI's global Stop Violence against Women campaign, the organization is calling for the provisions of CEDAW to be incorporated into national law and practice, and for Swaziland to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

### **Amnesty International Report 2004**

The Amnesty International Report 2004 documents human rights abuses in 155 countries and territories in every region of the world. You can obtain a copy of this authoritative annual human rights survey (POL 10/004/2004) from your local AI office, or by e-mail from [orderpub@amnesty.org](mailto:orderpub@amnesty.org)

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#### **Worldwide appeals**

#### **Syria: Human rights worker imprisoned**

Aktham Nu'aysa (left), aged 53, head of the Committees for the Defence of Democratic Liberties and Human Rights in Syria (CDDLHR), was arrested on 13 April. His arrest came after the CDDLHR published a report of human rights violations in Syria and led a campaign for the lifting of the state of emergency. AI considers Aktham Nu'aysa to be a prisoner of conscience and his detention to be arbitrary and in violation of Syria's obligations under international human rights law.

After more than a week of incommunicado detention at an undisclosed location, and in poor health, he reportedly suffered a stroke.

On 22 April Aktham Nu'aysa appeared before the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) in Damascus apparently in a miserable state of health and being physically supported by two security officers. Over two days, and despite his ill-health and lack of proper legal representation, he was interrogated by the SSSC about his human rights activities which the authorities considered hostile to the state. His lawyer was briefly allowed to attend and was told that the charges against him include "carrying out activities contrary to the socialist system of the state" and "opposing the objectives of the revolution", which could carry a sentence of up to 15 years in prison. The charges are believed to relate to his human rights activities and those of the CDDLHR. He is now said to be held in solitary confinement in Sednaya prison. He has been denied visits by his family and access to medical care.

Aktham Nu'aysa was a prisoner of conscience from 1991 to 1998. In 1992 he was sentenced to nine years in prison after a grossly unfair trial by the SSSC. He was tortured and ill-treated in custody. AI organized numerous actions to help secure his release and he was eventually freed two years before the end of his sentence. Since then, the security forces have harassed him constantly. They have also threatened his family and in 2003 attacked and beat his mother to intimidate him.

Please write to the Syrian authorities, calling for Aktham Nu'aysa to be released immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for his legitimate work in defence of human rights and the peaceful expression of his opinions.

Send appeals to: His Excellency Bashar al-Assad, President, Presidential Palace, Abu Rummaneh, al-Rashid Street, Damascus, Syria. Fax: +963 11 332 3410

### **Viet Nam: Montagnard demonstrations crushed**

Montagnard ethnic minority people have long suffered from discrimination as a result of official policies in their indigenous homelands of the Central Highlands of Viet Nam. On 10 and 11 April 2004 thousands of Montagnards demonstrated against continuing restrictions on their freedom of movement, communication and religious practice in Dak Lak, Dak Nong and Gia Lai, three Central Highlands provinces.

The demonstrations were met by the use of disproportionate and brutal force by the authorities. Security forces are reported to have ambushed protesters using tear gas, electric batons, water canon, metal bars, machetes and chains. At least eight people – H'Lo Kbuor (a blind woman), Ksor Hnun, Siu Plen, Ksor Jo, Y'Bhit Enuol, Y'Dlah Eban, Y'Wien and Y'Luyen Eban – were killed.

It is feared that the death toll is considerably higher. Many people were arrested and it is reported that a large number of people remain missing, despite official denials. In an attempt to restore order the authorities also subjected Montagnards to intimidatory practices such as the posting of police in people's homes and "self-criticism" sessions. No independent and impartial investigation into the events, and reports of killings, arrests and persons missing, has been allowed, and there are allegations of a government cover-up.

Please write calling on the government to permit independent and impartial agencies to carry out a full investigation into the April 2004 events in the Central Highlands, including unlawful killings by security forces, and to provide information on the fate and whereabouts of those arrested, and the charges against them. Call on the authorities to allow the Montagnard minority the rights to peaceful expression of their political beliefs and freedom of worship.

Send appeals to: Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, Office of the Prime Minister, Hoang Hoa Tham, Ha Noi, Viet Nam. Send copies of letters to the Vietnamese Embassy in your country and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Viet Nam, e-mail address: [bc.mfa@mofa.gov.vn](mailto:bc.mfa@mofa.gov.vn)

### **Guatemala: Human rights office staff threatened and assaulted**

Staff at the office of the non-governmental organization *Donde están los niños y las niñas?* (Where are the children?) are experiencing ever more threats, assaults and thefts of sensitive material, apparently in an attempt to prevent the organization from carrying out its work.

*Donde están los niños y las niñas?* investigates the circumstances in which children were "adopted" after they were separated from their parents during Guatemala's civil war. This is a very sensitive issue in which some military officers have been implicated. In the most recent incident, the organization's offices in Guatemala City were burgled during a holiday period of 8-12 April, and important case files about the involvement of military officials in human rights violations were stolen. Although the organization has moved offices several times in the past year to try to avoid further harassment and attacks, the intimidation and disruption to their work have continued.

There have been at least three attacks on staff since February last year as well as other reports of threats and intimidation. In mid-March 2004, María Isabel Escobar Donis, Director of the organization, was detained by three armed men a few blocks away from the organization's offices. They demanded her keys at gunpoint, and took the organization's car. It is believed that this was an attack on the organization itself rather than a simple car theft. This was the second such attack against her; in March 2003 she had been assaulted in a very similar manner. Two other staff members were assaulted in February 2003 and their bags containing tape recordings and other case information were stolen.

AI is concerned that their lives may be in danger.

Please write calling for an immediate and impartial investigation into reports of theft and intimidation directed at staff of *Donde están los niños y las niñas?* and asking that the results be made public and those responsible brought to justice.

Send appeals to: Licenciado Oscar Berger Perdomo, Presidente de la República de Guatemala, Casa Presidencial, 6a Avenida, 4-18 zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala, Fax: +502 238 3579/239 0090

## **Update**

### **Iran: human rights defender in jail**

Lawyer and human rights defender Nasser Zarafshan was not among a number of prisoners of conscience temporarily released from prison in Iran. The authorities have stated that he will have his turn for temporary leave, a provision in Iran's prisons.

Nasser Zarafshan was sentenced to 70 lashes and five years in prison in March 2002 by a closed military court on politically motivated charges of disseminating confidential information and illegal possession of a handgun and alcohol, which police allegedly found in his office. In July 2002 an appeal court upheld the sentence. See *Worldwide Appeal*, June 2002.

Please write to the authorities, asking for Nasser Zarafshan's conviction by a military court to be overturned and that, if he is charged with a recognizably criminal offence, he be given a fair trial. Send appeals to: Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Iran, or e-mail (subject: Attention of the office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khaemenei, Qom) to [webmaster@wilayah.org](mailto:webmaster@wilayah.org)

## **News in Brief**

### **REFUGEE NETWORK LAUNCHED**

On 20 June 2004, World Refugee Day, AI will launch a new thematic activists network, the Refugee Action Network. The network aims to engage global activism on refugee and migration through e-mail and web actions. To get involved go to [www.amnesty.org/refugees](http://www.amnesty.org/refugees)

### **BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

AI's campaign on corporate accountability was boosted when the UN Commission on Human Rights recognized the need to prioritize strengthening standards on business responsibilities in relation to human rights. Despite strong opposition from some representatives of the business sector and governments, a decision was adopted by consensus on 20 April that for the first time ever put companies' human rights responsibilities on the Human Rights Commission agenda. The decision thanks the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights for the work undertaken in preparing the UN Norms for Business. It asks the Office of the High

Commissioner for Human Rights to compile a report identifying ways to strengthen standards on businesses' human rights responsibilities and possible means of implementation.

AI believes this report will be a step towards greater protection for workers and communities, and can help companies ensure that their activities, including security arrangements and the activities of their sub-contractors, do not lead to human rights abuses.

### **DEATH PENALTY SETBACK**

The campaign for the abolition of the death penalty in Kenya suffered a serious setback in March. The draft Constitution proposed by the National Constitutional Conference and presented to the Attorney General made no mention that the death penalty would be abolished. Campaigners had been led to believe that the new Constitution, with an improved Bill of Rights, would abolish the death penalty for most crimes.

However, President Mwai Kibaki made a pledge not to carry out any death sentences during the present government's term of office and to commute the death sentences of all those presently on death row to life imprisonment. Kenya has not carried out any executions since the mid-1980s.

### **DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD**

The Day of the African Child, 16 June, is an opportunity to call on African governments to stop recruitment of child soldiers and to initiate programs of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). Recruitment of children under 15 is a war crime under international law, yet tens of thousands of children across Africa have been recruited, often forcibly, into government armed forces and armed political groups in the recent conflicts in Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia.

Across Africa, governments should mark the Day of the African Child by ratifying the Optional Protocols to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The international community should increase technical and financial support for DDR programs.

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### **Brutal consequences of the 'war on terror'**

*"What we now see in Iraq is the logical consequence of the relentless pursuit of the 'war on terror' regardless of the cost to human rights and the rules of war." Irene Khan, Secretary General, Amnesty International, May 2004*

The US government's flagrant disregard for international law in Iraq and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, has widespread implications for the whole world. Many other governments are using the "war on terror" to justify human rights abuses and silence their critics. AI fears that we are moving towards a world in which arbitrary and unchallengeable detentions become acceptable, torture and ill-treatment become "normal" and civilians are killed with impunity.

#### *Torture and war crimes in Iraq*

The shocking truth of torture in US-run prisons in Iraq was exposed to the world in May, when photographs of Iraqis being physically and mentally abused in Abu Ghraib prison, Baghdad, were published by newspapers and television stations worldwide.

Forced to respond, Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defense, claimed to be "stunned" by the abuses and said that these were an "exception" and "not a pattern of practice". Yet AI has repeatedly presented allegations of brutality and cruelty against detainees in Iraq and US

detention facilities across the world to the highest levels of the US government, including the White House, the Department of Defense and the State Department over the past two years.

Last July, AI raised allegations of torture and ill-treatment of Iraqi detainees by US and Coalition forces in a memorandum to the US Government and Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq. The allegations included beatings, electric shocks, sleep deprivation, hooding, and prolonged forced standing and kneeling.

According to an Iraqi woman held in Abu Ghraib prison for 26 days: “They used to bring the male prisoners to this bathroom/interrogation room, completely naked and with a black hood over their heads”. She described one night when “some Americans brought in 14 male inmates, naked and handcuffed, asked them to open their legs, beat them up from behind until they fell on the floor, again asked them to open their legs and beat them from behind in a way to hurt their genital organs. There were many screams.”

AI received no response nor any indication from the US Government or the CPA that any investigation into the allegations raised by AI was held. And, despite repeated requests, AI has been denied access to US detention facilities.

These abuses are war crimes. The US administration has shown a consistent disregard for the Geneva Conventions and basic principles of international law, human rights and decency. This has created a climate in which US soldiers feel they can dehumanize and degrade prisoners with impunity.

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#### *Unlawful killings*

More than a year after the occupation of Iraq, civilians are still being killed with impunity by Coalition forces. There have been no independent investigations into these unlawful killings.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed as clashes between Coalition forces and armed groups and individuals opposed to the occupation have intensified. In Falluja alone, at least 600 people, including many children, have been killed during clashes between US Marines and insurgents in April 2004.

UK armed forces in Iraq have shot and killed Iraqi civilians, including an eight-year-old girl and a guest at a wedding celebration, in situations where there was no apparent threat to themselves or others. Many of these civilian killings have not even been investigated. Investigations have been secretive, with families given little or no information about their progress.

To find out more see: *Iraq: Killings of civilians in Basra and al-'Amara* (MDE 14/007/2004).

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#### *Illegal detention: an international crisis*

The illegal detention and torture of “suspected terrorists” is not restricted to Iraq. Almost 600 people are held in arbitrary and illegal detention by the US authorities in Guantánamo. Thousands more are detained in other places across the world as a direct result of the “war on terror”.

The testimonies of those recently released from Guantánamo describe a cruel and degrading regime where prisoners are kept in open cages, deprived of sleep and forced to stand or kneel for hours. A former detainee at Guantánamo said “I’m in a cage like an animal. No one asked me am I human or not.”

Held without charge and denied their rights to free and fair trial, the detainees have no way of knowing how long their detention will continue. For their families, the uncertainty, insecurity and injustice compound the suffering caused by the absence of husbands, fathers and sons.

*Following the US lead*

Human rights and civil freedoms are under greater threat across the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula as a direct consequence of the US-led “war on terror”. Governments in the region are openly carrying out arbitrary detentions, invoking the actions of the US authorities as precedents or pressure from the US authorities as justification.

For example, Khaled al-Ibaidli, a diabetic 39-year-old father of six, was arrested by Qatari state security forces in August 2003. He is held in solitary confinement in a state security prison, “in the public interest”, according to the Public Prosecutors Office. His family do not know why he is held or for how long.

Across the region freedom of expression is being repressed in the name of security.

*Act now*

Human rights are becoming a casualty of the “war on terror”. If you want to take action, add your voice to AI’s latest appeals on [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

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AI has spoken out repeatedly against any compromise of human rights on the grounds of the “war on terror”. Upholding human rights is the duty of all governments, and it is at times of crisis, such as the one brought on by the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA, that human rights need more, not less, protection.

On 10-11 April, at a conference in Sana’a, Yemen, AI brought together for the first time relatives of detainees in the Gulf, human rights organizations, lawyers from throughout the Middle East and around the world, activists and members of civil society.

Launching the Sana’a Appeal, the participants at the conference called on governments of the USA and the Gulf region to end the legal limbo of detainees and to grant them full access to lawyers, doctors, families and the International Committee of the Red Cross. A committee of volunteers was formed to provide legal advice to the families of the detainees.

To add your voice to the Sana’a Appeal go to [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

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**The shadow of Tiananmen**

The spectre of the 1989 crack-down, when hundreds of pro-democracy protesters were killed by troops in Beijing, continues to haunt China 15 years on.

The Tiananmen protests still call to mind the image of one young man standing alone against a stream of tanks, of Chinese government forces who turned their guns on their own people.

The 1989 protests began in Beijing and spread to other major cities and provinces throughout China. This culminated on the night of 3-4 June 1989, when the army moved into Tiananmen Square and hundreds of unarmed civilians were killed or injured along their route. Tens of thousands were arrested in the aftermath across the country.

Fifteen years on there has still been no open inquiry into the deaths, injuries, arrests and events surrounding the 1989 protests. According to AI's records, at least 50 people are still imprisoned for their part in the protests. This figure is believed to be a mere fraction of the true figure which has never been released by the authorities.

Those challenging the official version of events are still being arrested, detained and harassed.

"The Tiananmen Mothers", relatives of those killed or injured during the crack-down, continue to campaign for justice, despite persistent government intimidation and persecution. Ding Zilin, Zhang Xianling and Huang Jinping were detained for several days in March 2004 in an apparent attempt to stop them from commemorating the anniversary.

Kong Youping, a factory worker from Anshan city, Liaoning Province, was detained in December 2003 for posting articles and poems on a foreign website calling for a reassessment of the 1989 events, an end to corruption and the release of a fellow Internet user. He is believed to remain behind bars, although it is unclear whether he has been charged or tried.

There are scores of similar abuses – a pattern which flies in the face of a white paper on human rights issued by the government on 30 March 2004. This claimed that during 2003 China had made "landmark progress" in protecting human rights. It came ahead of a European Union (EU) discussion on lifting its arms embargo on China, imposed in June 1989. Chinese officials described the EU arms embargo as "a relic of the cold war" and some EU member states called for the embargo to be lifted. AI cautioned the EU to consider what message it would be sending to human rights activists in China if it lifted the arms embargo and revealed that at least seven EU states sell arms to China despite the ban.

On the 15th anniversary of Tiananmen, AI and other concerned individuals and organizations once again remember the victims. AI urges the Chinese government to abide by the recent constitutional amendment to "respect and protect human rights", to release all prisoners of conscience, including those held in connection with the Tiananmen crackdown, and to conduct a full, independent and impartial inquiry into the events of 1989.

You can sign an online petition to the Chinese government at:  
[www.alliance.org.hk/signww\\_e.php](http://www.alliance.org.hk/signww_e.php) or [www.fillthesquare.org](http://www.fillthesquare.org)