

AI Index: PRE 01/128/2011  
10 March 2011

## **Iraqi activists' torture allegations spark fears for detained protesters**

A group of anti-government protesters missing since they were arrested this week in Baghdad are feared to be at risk of torture, after other recently released protestors told Amnesty International they were tortured in detention.

At least 10 people were detained on Monday while returning home from a Baghdad protest against unemployment, government corruption and poor social services.

The arrests came as other protesters who were detained last month told Amnesty International that they were tortured in detention.

"We fear there is a real risk of torture for those arrested on Monday, especially as their whereabouts in detention is yet to be disclosed. This seems to be following a pattern of protesters being detained and tortured as the Iraqi government tries to crackdown on demonstrations," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"The authorities must immediately reveal where these latest detainees are held and release them if they have been detained solely for exercising their legitimate right to protest."

Those detained on Monday include Ala' Sayhoud, Ma'an Thamer, 'Ali Abdel Zahra' and Muhammad Kadhim Finjan. They were arrested by Iraqi security forces in Baghdad's al-Batawin area after they participated in a demonstration in the city's Tahrir Square on Monday.

Two recently released activists have told Amnesty International that they were tortured or otherwise ill-treated in detention after they were arrested in connection with recent protests.

Abdel-Jabbar Shaloub Hammadi, who was detained without charge for 12 days following his arrest on 24 February, the day before a planned 'Day of Rage' protest in Baghdad, was beaten and tortured throughout his first five days in detention.

"They beat me a lot and kept me suspended every day for nearly 15 hours. In one method they tied my hands and legs together behind by back and left me hanging by a rope; in the other they suspended me from the wrists and left me standing on the tips of my toes on a chair - both were very painful," Hammadi told Amnesty International.

Journalist Hadi al-Mehdi, who was arrested on 25 February, told Amnesty International he received electric shocks to his feet and was threatened with rape during his interrogation by police.

"The Iraqi authorities claim that they are stamping out torture but as these testimonies show it continues to be used against detainees and the perpetrators appear to believe they can act with impunity," said

Malcolm Smart.

"The authorities must order an immediate independent investigation into all allegations of torture and those responsible for torture must be exposed and brought to justice."

As calls for reform persist in the country, Amnesty International has also called on the Iraqi authorities respect the right of assembly and freedom of expression.