

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: PRE 01/235/2009
24 June 2009

USA: Abuses at Bagram must be part of wider inquiry

A media report today on interviews with former Bagram detainees is a timely reminder of the continuing need for accountability, transparency and for the human rights of those held by the USA in Afghanistan to be fully protected said Amnesty International today. The organization reiterated its call on the US authorities to establish a full independent commission of inquiry into all aspects of the USA's detention and interrogation regime in what the Bush administration dubbed the "war on terror".

The former detainees, held in Bagram at various times between 2002 and 2008, told the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) they had been subjected to abuse in US custody, including beatings, stress positions, extremes of temperature, stripping, sleep deprivation, and death threats.

The men's accounts are consistent with Amnesty International's own research, including interviews with former Bagram detainees.

"The allegations are familiar. So, too, is the absence of accountability and remedy for such abuses", said Rob Freer, US Researcher at Amnesty International. "The USA continues to fail to meet its international obligation to fully investigate all such allegations and bring to account all those responsible for authorizing and carrying out human rights violations."

Amnesty International regrets that the new government has so far adopted wholesale the approach of its predecessor on the legal rights of the Bagram detainees. The organization has been calling on President Obama and his government to recognize the right of the detainees to challenge the lawfulness of their detention in an independent and impartial court.

In a letter last month, the Pentagon told Amnesty International that there were "approximately 565" detainees held in Bagram. Little is known about who they are, the circumstances of their arrests, or their current treatment and conditions of detention. None has access to legal counsel or the courts.

In response to the organization's concerns about child detainees, the Pentagon stated that since 2002 US forces had detained "approximately 100 juveniles in Afghanistan", of whom "fewer than five" were still held. The letter gave no other details on the Bagram detentions, saying that the information Amnesty International had requested was either classified or the subject of ongoing litigation in federal court.

Note to Editors

Amnesty International's experts on Bagram are available for interviews and comment.

For more information on Amnesty International's investigations regarding human rights abuses against Bagram detainees, please see:

Out of sight, out of mind, out of court? The right of Bagram detainees to judicial review, 18 February 2009, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/021/2009/en>

USA: Obama administration must take new approach on Bagram detentions, 19 February 2009, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/024/2009/en>.

Urgent need for transparency on Bagram detentions, 6 March 2009,

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/031/2009/en>

Administration opts for secrecy on Bagram detainee details, 12 March 2009,

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/034/2009/en>

Federal judge rules that three Bagram detainees can challenge their detention in US court, 3 April 2009, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/048/2009/en>

END/