

# URGENT ACTION

## HUNDREDS STILL DISAPPEARED FIVE YEARS ON

At least 643 men and boys from Anbar governorate in central Iraq have been missing for five years since their abduction by the Popular Mobilization Units, a state-affiliated armed group, on 3 June 2016. To this date, their families are uncertain if their loved ones are alive and the authorities have failed to take any meaningful action to locate and reveal their fate and whereabouts.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

**Prime Minister of Iraq**

Mustafa al-Kadhimi

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Your Excellency,

On the night of 3 June 2016, 1,300 men and boys considered to be of fighting age were subjected to enforced disappearance by the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), a state-affiliated armed group, as they were trying to flee the city of Saqlawiya, in Anbar Governorate, central Iraq, with their families. Out of the 1,300 men and boys, at least **643 remain subject to enforced disappearance** - a crime under international law. Their families have lived in agony ever since, not knowing whether their loved ones are safe or even still alive.

According to [credible testimonies gathered by Amnesty International](#) from former abductees, witnesses and relatives of those forcibly disappeared, the group fleeing Saqlawiya was met by armed individuals carrying machine guns and assault rifles. Witnesses identified the armed men as members of the PMU, based on emblems on their uniforms and flags. Armed members of the PMU separated the men and boys from the rest of the group and took them to buildings, garages and abandoned shops in the nearby area, confiscating their identity documents, phones and other valuables, and later bound their hands behind their backs, in most cases using plastic cuffs. At sunset, several buses arrived and together with a large truck transported a number of these boys and men. To date, the fate of those who boarded these vehicles remains unknown.

On 5 June 2016, the previous Prime Minister, Haidar al-Abadi, set up a committee to investigate disappearances and abuses committed in the context of military operations to retake Falluja. Separately, the local government of Anbar governorate also set up a committee which published its findings and stated that 643 internally displaced men and boys from the area of Saqlawiya are missing. To this date, both committees have failed to disclose any meaningful information on the fate and whereabouts of the 643 men and boys.

**We urgently call on Your Excellency to launch an impartial, prompt and independent investigation with a view to establishing the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared; to publicly disclose the findings of all previous investigations by all the committees established; to take immediate steps to reveal the fate and whereabouts of those who had been forcibly disappeared by the PMU and to provide justice, truth and reparation to all victims and their families.**

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The enforced disappearance of hundreds of boys and men in the city of Saqlawiya in June 2016 was not an isolated incident. Since the emergence of the group calling itself the Islamic State (IS) and other armed groups, including al-Qa'ida, in Iraq, thousands of Sunni men and boys have been subjected to enforced disappearance by Iraqi security forces and state-backed militias against the backdrop of ongoing armed conflict, insecurity and rising sectarian tensions.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Iraq has the [highest number](#) of missing people in the world. The number could range from 250,000 to one million. Amnesty International has documented dozens of enforced disappearances since 2014 in the governorates of Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala and Salah al-Din. On 21 September 2016, Amnesty International sent details of 105 individual cases of enforced disappearance which took place between September 2012 and August 2016 to previous Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, calling on him to ensure that prompt, independent and impartial investigations are carried out with a view to establishing the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared and bringing those suspected of criminal responsibility to justice in fair trials before ordinary civilian courts.

Previous government led investigations into serious human rights violations committed by the PMU also failed to provide remedy and reparation for victims. For instance, results of announced investigations into the unlawful killings and other abuses by the PMU in Barwana village and Muqdadiya city in Diyala governorate, that took place on 26 January 2015 and on 11 January 2016, respectively, have neither been made public nor held any members of PMU accountable, to the best knowledge of Amnesty International.

Iraq is a party to the International Convention on the protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Iraq's Law on Mass Graves Affairs stipulates that mass graves should be investigated by an inter-governmental committee that includes a judge. However, to this date, authorities exhuming mass graves in the surrounding areas of Saqlawiya could not confirm if the remains found belong to any or all of the 643 men and boys.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** English, Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 29 July 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PRONOUN:** 643 forcibly disappeared men and boys (he/his/him)