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**IRAQ: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR ON-SITE
HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING OPERATION**

Amnesty International today urged the United Nations to establish an international on-site human rights monitoring operation in Iraq to prevent torture, killings and other abuses by government forces.

"The United Nations must take far-reaching measures if the international community is to prevent another human rights crisis in Iraq," the human rights organization said as it presented its proposal this week to the UN Secretary General and the Iraqi government.

"The Iraqi government's record of massive reprisals - most recently after the uprisings earlier this year - leaves no doubt about the serious risk of human rights violations."

In the proposal, Amnesty International recommends that the special UN operation should be empowered to investigate alleged abuses, ensure protection for victims and work with the government to help enforce international standards.

The powers of the UN body could extend to visiting detention centres, interviewing political prisoners and observing trials, Amnesty International said.

"If those investigations show that people's lives or safety may be in danger, urgent action should be taken to protect them," Amnesty International said, adding that anyone who provides information about abuses must also be protected from reprisals.

The organization said the UN body should also be able to make recommendations to the Iraqi government to strengthen institutions or structures, such as an independent court system, that would help protect human rights in the long run and to ensure that the government lives up to international standards.

Some of the priority standards currently needed in Iraq include those dealing with the use of force and firearms, the conduct of security forces, the protection of detainees from torture, safeguards against arbitrary arrests, proper investigation of summary or arbitrary executions,

international standards for fair trials, and independence of the courts and lawyers.

"The United Nations has clearly recognized the urgent need to address the plight of the Iraqi population by setting up UN humanitarian aid offices in Iraq and sending guards for protection," Amnesty International said.

The organization said that an ongoing UN monitoring operation throughout the country would ensure that the protection promised people in Iraq is sustained, and extended to all people at risk of human rights abuses.

Recent reports by UN officials of evidence of a military build-up in southern Iraq where tens of thousands of Arab Shi'a Muslims are hiding have heightened fears that the Iraqi government plans to take harsh measures against these people -- who at present have no effective international protection from any attacks.

To underscore its fears about possible human rights violations in the coming months, Amnesty International today also published its preliminary findings on human rights violations following the Arab Shi'a and Kurdish uprisings in Iraq in March and April of this year.

The 19-page report details widespread arrests, torture and mass extrajudicial killings of people suspected of having taken part in the uprising in northern and southern Iraq. The organization said that the violations reported by more than 500 victims and eyewitnesses to abuses who were interviewed in Iran, Turkey and elsewhere were brutal in the extreme, even by Iraq's own record.

Hundreds of unarmed civilians were shot dead in the streets by Iraqi forces or executed by firing squads and countless more died through the targeted killing by helicopter gunships of unarmed civilians fleeing to the borders.

One person fleeing the city of Arbil after its recapture by Iraqi forces said he saw evidence of the bombings along a road that had been full of people in cars and trucks at the time. He found the bodies of his parents and other family members in and near the car they had fled in , which was totally charred. Elsewhere women and children were reportedly seen by eyewitnesses being used as " human shields", placed on top of tanks which were used to bombard residential areas of the town of Tannuma in the south.

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