

PETITION TO RT HON TONY BLAIR MP

FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SECTION DIRECTORS AND CHAIRS OF 51 COUNTRIES

Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

MDE14/055/2003

30 March 2003

Dear Prime Minister,

As Directors and Chairs of Amnesty International (AI) Sections from 51 countries around the world, representing over 1.6 million international members, we are today gathered at 10 Downing Street to express our urgent concern over reported abuses of humanitarian law in the current military intervention in Iraq.

We acknowledge commitments already made by the UK authorities to abide by international standards in the current conflict. The United Kingdom government, of course, has ratified the four Geneva Conventions, their additional protocols and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

During the course of armed conflict, the UK must scrupulously adhere to these standards and investigate any alleged violations. Moreover, it must use its influence to ensure that other parties to the conflict, in particular its partners in the coalition, also respect international standards and in particular international humanitarian law as required by Article 1 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

AI members around the world are deeply concerned about the human rights and humanitarian implications of the current military action in Iraq. As their representatives we wish to raise the following concerns:

- AI is concerned about the increase in Iraqi civilian casualties in the war, some of which may have been caused by a failure to distinguish between military and civilian objects or by the use of indiscriminate weapons. We request information on precautions put in place by the UK and other forces to protect civilians from military attack. There must be immediate and impartial investigations into all allegations of unlawful killings of civilians during the conflict in Iraq.
- AI is concerned that the recent targeting of media outlets in Iraq may be in breach of the Protocol 1 of the Geneva Conventions which forbids attacks on non-military targets. In the absence of evidence that the television station, recently bombed in Baghdad, was being used for a direct and concrete military purpose, AI considers this attack unlawful. The UK authorities must indicate to their coalition partners that such attacks are impermissible.

- We ask the UK government for assurances that it is not using inherently indiscriminate weapons, in particular that it is refraining from using cluster bombs and from directly or indirectly assisting the USA or other parties to the conflict in using anti-personnel landmines and cluster bombs. Depleted uranium weapons should also not be used, in the absence of a conclusive study on their long-term effects.
- The UK government must provide assurances that all detainees, including Prisoners of War, are being treated humanely, are not being interrogated against their will and are not subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
- AI also demands that the UK government do everything feasible to meet the humanitarian needs of the civilian population. Essential supplies must reach Iraqi civilians in need.

Having commenced military operations in Iraq, the UK Government and its coalition partners will be judged by the extent to which the needs and rights of Iraqi civilians are put at the centre of the military campaign and its aftermath. As we present this appeal, AI members are taking action globally to protect civilians during the current conflict and have issued appeals in relation to all parties to the conflict. We trust that you will take all measures to address the issues raised above and we ask you to publicly convey the UK government's commitment to human rights and humanitarian standards. We trust equally that you will do everything in your power to seek such commitments from your coalition partners.

Yours sincerely,

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Chair
AI Australia

Heinz Patzelt
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