

AI Index: PRE 01/445/2011
08 September 2011

UK must deliver justice over Baha Mousa abuse case

Amnesty International has called on the UK authorities to bring to justice all those responsible for the death of Baha Mousa, after an inquiry into the death of the Iraqi hotel receptionist found that UK soldiers violently assaulted him while in custody in Basra in 2003.

Baha Mousa suffered 93 separate injuries before he died, said the inquiry's report, which was released today. Nine other Iraqis held with Mousa were also subjected to human rights violations that constituted war crimes during their detention.

Nicola Duckworth, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director at Amnesty International said:

"What happened to Baha Mousa and the other men detained with him at the hands of British soldiers must never be allowed to happen again. Whatever the pressures the soldiers may have faced in Iraq during that time, torture can never be justified in any circumstances."

"Those responsible must be held accountable for their actions and brought swiftly to justice, including in criminal proceedings – nothing less will do".

The report found that the men had been beaten, kicked and punched, were hooded for long periods of time, held in illegal stress positions, subjected to verbal abuse, deprived of food and water and held in conditions of extreme heat and squalor.

The report names 19 individuals found to be responsible for the abuses, and emphasises they were part of a wider group who must have been aware of the violence but failed to report the abuse.

The inquiry also heavily criticised senior officers and pointed to a catalogue of failures through the chain of command, which contributed to the death of Baha Mousa and allowed the ill-treatment of the men to continue.

The report further emphasised the "corporate" and "systemic failure" of the Ministry of Defence to provide clear and consistent guidelines about the proper treatment of detainees.

"That it has taken eight years since the death of Baha Mousa for the full truth to be laid bare is shameful. Lessons must be learnt and the UK must take the recommendations of the Baha Mousa inquiry seriously and take immediate steps to ensure that these abuses never happen again," said Nicola Duckworth.

"There is a pressing need for genuine accountability for all human rights violations and crimes under international law perpetrated by UK armed forces in Iraq. Questions still need to be answered as to how widespread the abuse was and further investigations into similar allegations must be conducted in a proper manner. Ultimately we are still waiting for justice to be done."