

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Iraq war: Global backlash against human rights**

Human rights abuses connected to the war on Iraq have not been limited to that country -- the war's impact on human rights has been seen in many countries around the world, Amnesty International declared today as it released its report *In the shadow of war: backlash against human rights*.

"Governments appear to be using the world's focus on the theatre of war to violate human rights shielded from public scrutiny."

Amnesty International's initial report documents examples of how, since the beginning of the military operation, there has been a backlash against certain human rights in 14 countries.

"From Egypt to the USA, from Belgium to Sudan, governments must respect fundamental rights and refrain from using the war in Iraq as a pretext for curtailing or abusing these rights," Amnesty International stated.

The report documents:

#### **Attacks on the rights to freedom of expression and assembly**

Authorities in various countries have attempted to prevent people from demonstrating and have harassed and arbitrarily detained those who have demonstrated. In some cases "anti-terrorism" legislation has been used to support these violations.

In Belgium, since early March, more than 450 anti-war demonstrators have been placed under administrative arrest, a form of "preventive" detention lasting up to 12 hours. In the UK, the Terrorism Act has been invoked in some areas to allow special police powers to "stop and search" people without reasonable suspicion.

#### **Excessive use of force by police against anti-war demonstrators**

Since 20 March, millions of people around the world have taken to the streets to protest against the war in Iraq. In seven countries police have used excessive force against demonstrators; in some cases this resulted in deaths -- including an 11-year-old child. Some demonstrators have been beaten and thousands arbitrarily detained. Some of those detained have been ill-treated or tortured.

In Sudan, three students were reportedly killed during demonstrations in Khartoum. In Greece, anti-riot police beat Iraqi immigrants and took 38 of them away to check their identities; three of them are still in hospital recovering from their injuries. In Turkey, riot police used batons to disperse about 5,000 people who had gathered after Friday prayers on 21 March to protest against the war outside the Beyazit mosque.

### **Restriction of asylum rights**

In many parts of the world, the rights of asylum seekers are being restricted or abused.

In the European Union, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the UK have frozen decisions on Iraqi asylum claims. In the USA, "Operation Liberty Shield" mandates the detention of asylum-seekers from Iraq and at least 33 other, as yet unnamed, countries who arrive in the USA and seek asylum at the point of entry.

The report contains entries on Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Jordan, Norway, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Turkey, UK, USA and Yemen.

**To see the full version of the report, please visit:**  
<http://web.amnesty.org/recent/ai.nsf/mde140572003>

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For further information on Amnesty International's concerns and recommendations about the crisis in Iraq please visit: <http://www.amnesty.org/go/iraq>

Public Document

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