

EXTERNAL

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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Middle East
Date: 19 December 1990

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

Human rights violations since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait

Keywords

Theme: arbitrary arrest/detention without trial/disappearance/extrajudicial execution/ill-treatment/ill-health/inadequate medical care/torture

Profession/association: dentist/doctor/nurse/Red Crescent

Summary

Since the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces on 2 August 1990, violations of basic human rights have been widespread. These are documented in the attached Amnesty International report *Iraq/Occupied Kuwait: Human rights violations since 2 August* [MDE 14/16/90, 19 December 1990] and include arbitrary arrests and disappearances, torture, and summary and extrajudicial executions.

Among those killed are scores of civilians, including newborn babies, who died as a direct result of their forced removal from life-support machines. Prisoners, currently in detention, are not receiving adequate care for pre-existing illnesses or for those wounded during arrest or suffering from the effects of torture inflicted following arrest. Medical personnel have been among those subjected to human rights abuses, sometimes at or near hospitals.

The whole report contains strong and powerful evidence of human rights abuses but the following sections are particularly relevant to a medical audience:

Torture: pp.29-32; evidence provided by doctors: pp.32-34
torture of women: pp.34-37

Methods of torture: pp.37-40.

Extrajudicial executions: see 10 cases, pp.51-53.

Deaths due to deprivation of medical care: pp.53-56.

Extracts from medical reports and photographs: pp.73-81.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The objective of this action is to raise the awareness of the medical profession to human rights violations in Kuwait and to organise letter-writing to Iraqi diplomatic representatives in your country. Letter-writing directly to Iraq is not recommended.

Letters

Letters from medical professionals should be sent to the nearest Iraqi diplomatic mission:

- # stating that you are writing as a concerned health professional motivated by humanitarian considerations
- # recording your grave concern at reports of widespread human rights violations in Kuwait since 2 August 1990
- # expressing deep disquiet at reports of the killing of health personnel in Kuwaiti hospitals and the failure of Iraqi forces to respect the rights of those working and receiving treatment in hospitals
- # urging that there should be an investigation into allegations of all killings of civilians carried out by Iraqi forces, including those of babies and adults reported to have been taken off life-support systems
- # urging the release of all prisoners held for non-violent activities if they are not to be charged with recognisable criminal offences
- # urging that instructions be given to all Iraqi soldiers that torture is absolutely prohibited and that all prisoners should be provided with whatever medical care they require in accordance with international prison standards
- # urging that medical personnel be allowed to continue their humanitarian work without interference in conformity with international humanitarian law

Copies of letters can be sent to:

Kuwait Red Crescent Society
 PO Box 882
 Al-Manama
 BAHRAIN Fax: +973.293728

Publicity

Groups should make copies of the attached report available to medical journalists or alternatively you could write letters and articles for publication based on the report. Any resulting publications should be copied to the nearest Iraqi diplomatic representatives.

Approaches to your professional associations

Copies of the attached report should be sent to your professional associations with a request that they send appeals to the Iraqi Embassy or to the Iraqi Government. You could draw particular attention to the passages referred to above.

Important note. It is obvious that this report will appear during a period of intense political discussion about the Gulf conflict. It is important to emphasise that Amnesty International takes no position on the conflict and to draw attention to Al's persistent exposure of human rights violations in Iraq (and in other countries in the region) over a long period. As the report notes (p.4):

"Amnesty International has repeatedly placed ... information [on human rights in Iraq] on the public record, and regrets that until the invasion of Kuwait, the international community did not see fit to apply serious pressure in an attempt to put an end to these abuses."