

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: MDE 14/021/2009
28 July 2009

Iraq: Camp Ashraf residents attacked

Amnesty International is seriously concerned at today's attacks by Iraqi forces on unarmed residents of Camp Ashraf which left several people injured and led to the arrest of at least eight others.

Hundreds of armed Iraqi security forces are said to have stormed the camp, north of Baghdad, at around 3pm local time. They used tear gas, water canons and batons against unarmed Iranian residents who tried to stop them from entering the camp.

Video footage seen by Amnesty International clearly shows Iraqi forces beating people repeatedly on different parts of the body, including the head. Dozens of people are said to have been injured. Two of them, Reza Chelcheraqi and Mohammad-Reza Shahsavandi, are believed to be in serious condition. At least eight people, including Hasan Besharati, Humayoun Deyhim, Gholam Reza Behrouzi, Hosein Fili, Mehdi Zareh and Naser Nour Ebadian, were arrested and their current whereabouts are unknown.

In the last few months the Iraqi government has publicly stated that it wants to take over full control of Camp Ashraf, in Diyala governorate, north of Baghdad. On 27 July government spokesperson 'Ali al-Dabbagh told an Iraqi satellite television channel that the government "will take over the responsibility of internal security affairs of Camp Ashraf". The authorities are reportedly planning to establish a police outpost inside the camp.

Amnesty International calls on the Iraqi government to investigate the apparent excessive use of force by Iraqi security forces. The government should reveal the whereabouts of the eight people detained and ensure that they are protected from torture or other ill-treatment, as well as from forcible return to Iran.

Background

Around 3,400 residents of Camp Ashraf are members or supporters of the People's Mojahdeen Organization of Iran (PMOI), an Iranian opposition organization whose members have been resident in Iraq for many years. Until recently the PMOI was listed as a "terrorist" organization by the European Union and other governments, but in most cases this designation has now been lifted on the grounds that the PMOI no longer advocates or engages in armed opposition to the government of Iran.

The US forces provided protection for the camp and its residents, who were designated as "protected persons" following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but this situation was discontinued following the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the US and Iraqi governments, although the SOFA makes no reference to Camp Ashraf or its residents.

Public Document

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