



World Organisation Against Torture

PRESS RELEASE

Iraq: OMCT condemns the recent attack on Camp Ashraf

Geneva, 4 September 2013. The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) urges the United Nations (UN) to carry out an investigation into the recent attack on Camp Ashraf, an Iranian exiles camp located in Iraq, on 1st September 2013, that left 52 people dead and several injured.

According to the information received, Iraqi security forces attacked Camp Ashraf early on 1st September 2013, where about 100 people lived after most of its residents were relocated to Camp Liberty in 2012. According to a UNAMI press release, “all the deceased appeared to have suffered gunshot wounds, the majority of them in the head and the upper body, and several with their hands tied”¹. OMCT is also gravely concerned about the whereabouts and fate of seven residents, who were reportedly abducted during the attack, and urges the authorities to immediately release them.

“The attack has to be investigated promptly and independently in accordance with international standards, and those responsible for this attack have to be brought to justice”, said Gerald Staberock, Secretary General of OMCT.

OMCT has already expressed many times its concern over the security conditions for the residents of both camps, including after the rocket and mortar attack on Camp Liberty in February 2013 that left eight people dead and several injured. OMCT recalls that Iraq has clear obligations under international human rights law to ensure the safety of both camps residents.

About 3'100 members of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI), an Iranian opposition group, were relocated in 2012 to a temporary facility nearby Bagdad known as Camp Liberty, after having lived several years in Camp Ashraf. About 100 individuals remained in Camp Ashraf to protect and organise the transfer of the residents' belongings in line with an agreement reached with the Iraqi government.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has repeatedly recalled that the residents of these camps are asylum seekers underdoing the refugee status determination and thus entitled to international protection.

The OMCT recalls that it considers vital to find a viable and durable solution for the residents of the camps in compliance with human rights law and calls on the international community to step up its efforts to prevent further serious human rights violations against the camps residents.

After the USA handed the protection of Camp Ashraf over to the authorities of Iraq in January 2009 and despite guarantees by the Iraqi government, the camp has been raided on at least two occasions by the Iraqi security forces in view of expelling its residents and closing the camp. The attacks led to the deaths of 47 residents and hundreds of injured. The residents were also subjected to numerous acts of harassment, among others, family members or lawyers being prevented from entering the camp and the use by Iraqi security forces of powerful loudspeakers to psychologically harass them.

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¹ United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) press release “UNAMI delegation visits Camp Ashraf to assess the situation following reports of massacre” issued on 3rd September 2013.