



The World Organisation Against Torture

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H.E. Mr. Jean De Ruyt
European Union's Special Representative on Camp Ashraf

Via fax : +32 2298 7172

Geneva, 10 November 2011

Re: Fear for the safety of Camp Ashraf's residents

Your Excellency,

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the largest Network of NGOs fighting against torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the world, welcomes your appointment as the European Union's special representative on Camp Ashraf, and wishes to avail itself of this opportunity to express its deepest concern about the safety of Camp Ashraf's residents, in Diyala province, 90 km north-east of Bagdad.

Camp Ashraf is home to 3,400 unarmed civilians, members of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI), an Iranian opposition group. In July 2004, Camp Ashraf residents were entitled as "protected persons" to the protections provided in the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949). The United States of America (USA) administration also signed an agreement with each resident to protect them until their final disposition. In January 2009, the USA handed the protection of Camp Ashraf over to the authorities of Iraq. However, despite guarantees by the Iraqi government, the camp has been raided on two occasions since 2009 in view of expelling its residents and closing the camp. The attacks led to the deaths of 47 residents and hundreds of injured.

On 28 July 2009, the Iraqi security forces entered Camp Ashraf with bulldozers, and used grenades, teargas, water canons and pepper spray against Ashraf residents. Eleven people were reportedly killed and several injured during the raid. Furthermore, 36 residents were arrested and first taken to an unknown location before being transferred to a police station in the town of al-Khalis, outside Camp Ashraf. Reports indicate that they were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. The residents of Camp Ashraf have since reportedly been deprived of basic needs, such as medical care, fuel and necessary supplies for the camp. Since 2010, they have also been subjected to numerous acts of harassment, among others, family members or lawyers being prevented from entering the camp and the use by Iraqi forces of powerful loudspeakers to psychologically harass them. According to the same information received, on 8 April 2011, around 2500 soldiers of the Iraqi armed forces entered anew Camp Ashraf. The soldiers reportedly fired indiscriminately at the residents killing 36 residents, among them at least four women, and leaving over 325 injured persons.

OMCT has expressed, on several occasions, its concern over the safety of Camp Ashraf's residents. The Iraqi government has repeatedly stated that the camp should be closed and its residents expelled from Iraq. The recent statement by Iraq's Prime Minister, Mr. Nouri Al-Maliki, to close down the camp by the end of 2011 without a safe solution for its residents, is all the more alarming and causes an acute risk of further serious human rights violations.

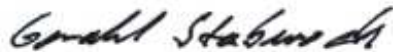
OMCT recalls that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) declared in a statement issued on 13 September 2011 that the residents of Camp Ashraf are “formally asylum seekers” and called on the government of Iraq to extend “the deadline for the closure of the camp” in view of examining the request for refugee status in a timely and proper manner.

In view of the latest events and considering the urgency of preventing future attacks and serious human rights violations, OMCT hopes that you will raise our concerns with the Iraqi authorities to

- guarantee, in all circumstances, the physical and psychological integrity of Camp Ashraf residents, including by not forcibly returning any resident to Iran, where she/he would be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment, in line with Iraq’s obligations to ensure the protection of human rights to all those under its jurisdiction;
- lift the self-proclaimed deadline to close Camp Ashraf and ensure that the UNHRC can carry out individual interviews in a safe, neutral and confidential location;
- allow the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to monitor the human rights situation in Camp Ashraf until all its residents have been safely resettled.

We thank you for your consideration of our concerns and recommendations. We are at your disposal should you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,



Gerald Staberock
Secretary General