



Eight reported killed as Iraqi forces attack Iranian residents of Camp Ashraf

29 July 2009

Eight people are reported to have been killed and up to 400 injured after Iraqi forces attacked unarmed Iranian residents of Camp Ashraf, north of Baghdad, on Tuesday. Amnesty International has called on the Iraqi government to investigate the apparent excessive use of force by its security forces.

Hundreds of armed security forces used bulldozers to force their way into the camp at around 3pm local time. They used tear gas, water cannons and batons against unarmed 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. Of the 400 people injured, 13 are said to be in a critical condition.

In addition to the numerous casualties, camp residents say that around 50 people were arrested. Their current whereabouts are unknown.

In the last few months, the Iraqi government has publicly stated that it wants to seize full control of Camp Ashraf. On Monday, 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 reported to be planning to establish a police outpost inside the camp.

Amnesty International now calls on the Iraqi government to reveal the whereabouts of the 50 people detained and ensure that they are protected from torture or other ill-treatment, as well as from forcible return to Iran.

Around 3,500 residents of Camp Ashraf are members or supporters of the People's Mojahedeen 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.

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