



The Archbishop of
Canterbury

Message from the Archbishop of Canterbury to families, relatives and supporters of the residents of Camp Ashraf in the UK

20 September 2009

The Archbishop of Canterbury, currently on a visit to the Anglican Church in Japan, today issued a statement highlighting his concerns for the residents of Camp Ashraf in Iraq.

Earlier in the week the Archbishop met a small group of Ashraf supporters, including some of those currently on hunger strike, to listen to their concerns. It was clear to the Archbishop that important humanitarian and pastoral issues were at stake which required urgent attention.

"The continuing situation in Camp Ashraf, together with the fact that the 36 people taken from the camp in July have not been released, constitutes a humanitarian and human rights issue of real magnitude and urgency. There is a strong argument in terms of international law that the Ashraf residents are "protected persons". Both the government of Iraq and the government of the United States – as the agency responsible for the transfer of the residents to another jurisdiction – have an obligation to secure the rights of these residents and to defend them from violence or abuse.

I am in contact with our own government as well as representatives of other governments to urge that the current situation be remedied urgently. A very significant step towards the long-term security of the residents will be the establishing of a UN monitoring team to visit the camp. Meanwhile I hope that all concerned will listen to what those across the world who are deeply anxious about these human rights violations are saying, and respond as a matter of urgency.

In the same humanitarian spirit I would also urge those who have been demonstrating their concern by not taking food to bring their fast to an end. Further loss of life would only compound recent tragic events. "

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