



UN human rights office welcomes release of Iranian detainees in Iraq

9 October 2009 –United Nations human rights officials today welcomed the Iraqi Government’s decision to release 36 members of an Iranian dissident group who had been detained since July when security personnel used force to take control of the camp where they had been staying.

Rupert Colville, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), told journalists in Geneva that the world body was grateful that the Government had responded to a request from High Commissioner Navi Pillay to release the detainees.

The 36 people are part of around 3,400 members of the People’s Mojahedeen Organization of Iran (PMOI), also known as Mujahedin-e Khalq, who have been living in Camp Ashraf in Iraq’s Diyala province.

In a two-day operation in late July, Iraqi security personnel took control of Camp Ashraf. Eleven people were killed and dozens more were wounded in that operation, Mr. Colville said.

“All detainees in Iraq, including members of PMOI, are entitled to proper judicial procedures and – if there is evidence they may have committed a crime – a fair trial,” he said. “They should be granted all the rights guaranteed to them under international and domestic laws.

“The Iraqi court at al-Khalis, where the detainees were first held, twice ordered their release because of a lack of credible evidence, but for reasons which remain unclear they continued to be held in detention for a total of some two and a half months.”

Mr. Colville stressed that OHCHR considers it “a matter of paramount importance that a long-term solution be found for the residents of Camp Ashraf, inside Iraq or elsewhere. We recognize that the past history of several members of this group is a complicating factor. But the status quo is not tenable.

“In the meantime, the fundamental rights of the camp’s occupants should be respected, including the right not to be forcibly returned to their home country so long as there is a risk of torture.”

Mr. Colville said OHCHR and the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq ([UNAMI](#)) would continue to monitor the situation in Camp Ashraf.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32484&Cr=iraq&Cr1=>