

Iraq authorities must investigate excessive use of force in Camp Ashraf

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Since 1986, Camp Ashraf in Iraq has been home to around 3,500 members or supporters of the People's Mojahedeen Organization of Iran (PMOI), an Iranian opposition group.

Over the last year or so, several Iraqi government officials have publicly stated that Camp Ashraf residents must evacuate the camp and leave the country.

Nine Camp Ashraf residents were killed and hundreds more were injured when Iraqi security forces stormed the camp on 28 July. Another 36 were detained and subjected to beatings and torture.

Iraqi security forces used tear gas, water cannon and batons against camp residents who were trying to stop them. In video footage of the raid, Iraqi security forces can be seen beating people repeatedly on different parts of the body and, it would appear, deliberately driving military vehicles into crowds or protesting camp residents. Live ammunition is also said to have been used, resulting in some residents being shot dead or sustaining serious injuries.

The 36 detainees are currently being held at a police station in the town of al-Khalis, about 25km south of Camp Ashraf. Some are in need of medical treatment due to injuries, including as a result of torture and gunshot wounds.

The detainees are reported to have been told to sign documents in Arabic but to have refused. They have been denied access to lawyers of their choice and have launched a hunger strike in protest against their detention and ill-treatment. One of the 36 who had been shot in the legs and arm has been admitted to a hospital in the town of Baquba, north of Baghdad. He has undergone three surgical operations.

Amnesty International is concerned that the 36 Camp Ashraf residents are at risk of being forcibly returned to Iran where they could face torture and execution. It is calling for the detainees to be released unless they are to be tried promptly and fairly on recognizable criminal charges. The organization has called on the Iraqi authorities to investigate the apparent use of excessive force by Iraqi security forces as well as all allegations of torture and beatings, and to bring perpetrators to justice

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/eight-reported-killed-iraqi-forces-attack-iranian-residents-camp-ashraf-20090729>