

URGENT ACTION

ABDUCTED IRANIAN EXILES IN IRAQI CUSTODY

The seven Iranian exiles abducted on 1 September are now known to be held by the Iraqi security forces at an unofficial detention facility in central Baghdad. They are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment and could be forcibly returned to Iran.

According to reliable sources, the seven were transferred under tight security to an unofficial detention facility in the former al-Muthanna airport in central Baghdad at the end of September. The seven remain under investigation. They are six women, **Fatemeh Tahoori**, **Vajihe Karbalaey** (aka Vajihe Karbalaey Fatah), **Mahnaz Azizi** (aka Mahbobeh Lashkari), **Lila Nabahat**, **Zahra Ramezani** (aka Sedegh Ebrahimpour), **Fatema Sakhie** and a man, **Mohammad Ratebi** (aka Mohsen Nicknamei). They are all members of the Iranian opposition group People's Mojahedeen Organization of Iran (PMOI).

The seven Iranian exiles were abducted on 1 September 2013 from Camp Ashraf, about 60km north-east of Baghdad in Diyala governorate, when armed men raided the camp and shot and killed 52 residents. Video footage and photographs showed that many of the 52 had been shot in the head, some while handcuffed. Eyewitnesses from the camp said they had seen the seven people in handcuffs, being beaten, thrown to the ground and then taken away in a white minibus.

The Iraqi government has denied responsibility for the attack although Iraqi forces have been responsible for previous attacks on the camp that left dozens of residents dead. On 1 September Iraq's Prime Minister ordered that a committee be set up to investigate the killings. However he gave no details of the committee's terms of reference and composition. The results of the investigation have not been published.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Iraqi authorities to release Fatemeh Tahoori, Vajihe Karbalaey, Mahnaz Azizi, Lila Nabahat, Zahra Ramezani, Fatema Sakhie and Mohammad Ratebi unless they are charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence;
- Urging them to immediately disclose their whereabouts and ensure that the seven people are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and have access to a lawyer of their own choosing;
- Urging them to publish the outcome of the investigation into the killing of the 52 residents of Camp Ashraf;
- Reminding them of their obligations under international law not to forcibly return anyone to a country where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations, including torture.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 DECEMBER 2013 TO:

Prime Minister

His Excellency Nuri Kamil al-Maliki,
Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma'aridh)
Baghdad,
IRAQ

Email: info@pmo.iq (keep trying)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Hassan al-Shammari
Ministry of Justice
Baghdad,
IRAQ

Contactable in Arabic via web site:

<http://www.moj.gov.iq/complaints.php>

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Human Rights

His Excellency Mohammad Shayaa al-Sudani

Ministry of Human Rights

Baghdad,

IRAQ

Email: shakawa@humanrights.gov.iq

Also send copies to:

Ambassador Samir Shakir Mahmood Sumaida'ie, Embassy of the Republic of Iraq
3421 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20007

Phone: 1 202 742 1600 EXT 136

Fax: 1 202 333 1129 | Email: amboffice@iraqiembassy.org

Please send appeals immediately. Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The residents of Camp Ashraf are members and supporters of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI), a group opposed to the Iranian government and outlawed in Iran, which formerly engaged in armed action against the Iranian government. Camp Ashraf previously housed some 3,400 Iranian exiles, mostly members and supporters of the PMOI, who were allowed to move to Iraq by Saddam Hussain's government in the 1980s.

After the March 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq the camp and its residents were placed under US protection but this ended in mid-2009 following an agreement between the US authorities and the Iraqi government. Barely a month later, on 28-29 July, Iraqi security forces stormed the camp; at least nine residents were killed and many more were injured. Thirty-six residents who were detained were allegedly tortured and beaten.

Iraqi troops stormed Camp Ashraf again in April 2011. The troops used excessive force, including live ammunition, against residents who tried to resist. At least 36 people were killed and more than 300 injured. The government failed to conduct a prompt, thorough, independent, and impartial investigation into the incident, in breach of international standards, including the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions.

The Iraqi government announced in 2011 that they intended to close Camp Ashraf after relocating its residents to Camp Liberty in Baghdad. After most had been relocated about 100 people were allowed to stay behind in Camp Ashraf to resolve remaining property issues. Following the 1 September 2013 attack on the camp and killing of the 52 residents, the remaining 41 were transferred to Camp Liberty under UN supervision.

According to a December 2011 memorandum of understanding between the UN and the government of Iraq, the UNHCR may process requests for international protection from residents of the camps. Those residents who apply for international protection are asylum-seekers under international law. So far around 2000 residents have been interviewed by UNHCR. However, many residents have refused to be interviewed, citing security concerns. So far only around 210 residents have been resettled in third countries, most in Albania.

Names: Fatemeh Tahoori (f), Vajihe Karbalaey (f), Mahnaz Azizi (f), Lila Nabahat (f), Zahra Ramezani (f), Fatema Sakhie (f), Mohammad Ratebi (m)

Issue(s): Abduction, Risk of torture, Forced return, Unlawful killing

Further information on UA: 242/13 (11 September 2013)

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