

# Stop the massacre of Iranian opponents in Ashraf

Thursday, 30 July 2009

Statement by Lord Maginnis of Drumglass: It is so illogical that, amid the confusion over how it should support operations in Afghanistan and bearing in mind the impending enquiry as to whether its engagement in Iraq was based on justifiable cause, that our Government should be so insensitive to the needs Iranian refugees in Camp Ashraf in Iraq.

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It is so illogical that, amid the confusion over how it should support operations in Afghanistan and bearing in mind the impending enquiry as to whether its engagement in Iraq was based on justifiable cause, that our Government should be so insensitive to the needs Iranian refugees in Camp Ashraf in Iraq. Almost 3,500 Iranians who would be our friends; who uphold the concept of Democracy and Human Rights in Iran and who oppose the cruel mullahs regime have been abandoned by the UK and the US to be brutalised.

How could our forces, and those of the United States, have been pulled back in Iraq, leaving a situation where those Iraqis, for whose freedom from oppression our soldiers fought and died, now engage in a punitive and outrageous attack on unarmed civilian refugee Iranians in Ashraf?

On numerous occasions over the past six months I have alerted Government about the welfare and safety of the Camp Ashraf community and have drawn attention to the ominous rumblings from some Iraqi Ministers to whom Amnesty International has also drawn attention.

On 28th April I was told, "Our Ambassador called on the Iraqi Human Rights Minister, Wijdan Salim, on 13 April 2009 to raise the issue of Camp Ashraf and make her aware of the level of interest in this issue in the UK, including in Parliament. Minister Wijdan assured our ambassador that doctors and medical supplies were permitted to enter the camp. The Minister also confirmed that families were allowed to visit the camp. Also on 13 April, consular officials at our embassy in Baghdad visited the camp to clarify whether any of the residents warrant UK consular assistance. We remain concerned that the human rights of all residents of Camp Ashraf are fully observed. There is no evidence to suggest that the Government of Iraq intend forcibly to relocate the residents to a country where they have reason to fear persecution based on their political opinions or religious beliefs, or where substantial grounds exist to believe they would be tortured.

The International Committee of the Red Cross follows developments at the camp closely. It also discusses on a confidential basis the camp with the People's Mujaheddin Organisation of Iran (MeK), the Iraqi authorities and the US, which retain a presence at the camp in a monitoring and advisory capacity."

Again on 1st June government responded to my expression of concern, "We are aware of the Amnesty International report of 20 April 2009 and the interview with the Iraqi National Security Adviser. We are continuing to urge the Government of Iraq to observe fully the human rights of the residents of Camp Ashraf and to find a humanitarian solution."

Now Amnesty International has confirmed that, despite our Government's apparent confidence, hundreds of Iraqi armed forces 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".

There have been more than a dozen dead and over 500 severely injured thus far. The brutal attack amounts to a crime against humanity and a war crime. Iraqi police have since 28 July beaten the residents, who are all members of the main Iranian opposition group, the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI), and no food or doctors and journalists have been allowed into the camp. At least 50 residents have been arrested.

The criminal operation against Ashraf residents, who are all "protected persons" under the Fourth Geneva Convention, was carried out at the request of the Iranian regime's Supreme Leader.

It should not be overlooked that it was our US allies who disarmed and signed agreements with every single Ashraf resident vowing to protect them until the determination of their final status. The U.K. cannot divorce itself from that guarantee or from its share of responsibility to protect Ashraf residents.

The UN Security Council must now intervene to stop the killings, if a further humanitarian tragedy is to be avoided. The U.N. Secretary General needs to act immediately and those responsible for the current atrocities must be brought before an International Criminal Tribunal.

Our Government cannot continue to adopt a Pontius Pilate stance on this issue.