

MPs condemn Iraq for building prison to house Iranian dissidents

Thursday, 05 January 2012

BPCIF: MPs and Peers condemn Iraq for transforming parts of an ex-US base in Baghdad, Camp Liberty, into a makeshift prison to house some 3,400 Iranian dissidents - members of the main Iranian opposition PMOI who are currently residing in Camp Ashraf, 90 km north of Baghdad.

BPCIF: We strongly condemn Iraq for transforming parts of an ex-US base in Baghdad, Camp Liberty, into a makeshift prison to house some 3,400 Iranian dissidents - members of the main Iranian opposition PMOI who are currently residing in Camp Ashraf, 90 km north of Baghdad.

Having received assurances for their safety from the United Nations and United States, the Iranian dissidents agreed to forego their right to remain in Camp Ashraf and to relocate to Camp Liberty. A first group of 400 residents were ready as early as late December to go there along with their belongings and vehicles.

American and UN officials had earlier stated that a 40 sq km area of Camp Liberty with adequate facilities and infrastructure would be allocated to the residents; but the Iraqi government is now preparing to house the entire population in a 1 sq km area surrounded by 4-metre concrete walls. Basic facilities, including functioning toilets are not available, and residents are being denied permission to take there their belongings or vehicles. A request by the residents to send a small inspection team to the new site prior to any transfer has been turned down by Iraq.

Residents have been told they will not be permitted to leave the new premises or visit their lawyers, and an Iraqi police station will be established within the premises to exert full control over the prisoners on a permanent basis.

Under these conditions, the British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom urges the residents not to relocate to the new site.

The US, EU and UN have a particular responsibility to uphold the rights of these Iranian dissidents and must intervene immediately to ensure that basic services and security are going to be provided for the residents at the new camp. The residents' lawyers must be allowed access to the site and be able to inspect it before any transfer.

British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom
5 January 2012

Notes to Editors:

We had only supported the UN deal to relocate the residents to the new camp based on the assurances provided by UN special envoy Mr. Martin Kobler in his 28 December open letter to Ashraf residents and the 25 December public statement by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Without international intervention, Iraq cannot be trusted to uphold the residents' safety and rights.

Our committee finds the transfer of the residents to Camp Liberty unacceptable unless the minimum demands announced by Mrs. Maryam Rajavi are implemented. In particular, the residents' representatives must be given 48-hour advance access to Camp Liberty for inspection of the site, and the residents must be permitted to transfer their belongings and moveable property, especially their vehicles, otherwise the transfer would be considered as forcible relocation. No Iraqi armed forces must be stationed inside the perimeter of the new camp, and Iraq must drop its bogus charges against all residents.

Iraqi forces attacked Ashraf in 2009 and 2011 at Iran's behest, killing 47 and injuring hundreds.