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UNAMI/١٥/٢٠٠٨

UNAMI issues its ١٢th report on the situation of human rights in Iraq

Baghdad, ١٥ March ٢٠٠٨--The UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) issued its twelfth report on the human rights situation in the country covering the period ١ July – ٣١ December ٢٠٠٧. The report recognizes that the last three months of ٢٠٠٧ were characterized by a marked decrease in violent attacks involving mass casualties, including suicide attacks and car bombings.

The report notes the enormous challenges the Government of Iraq continued to face during the reporting period in its efforts to bring sectarian violence and other criminal activity under control against a backdrop of political instability and stalled efforts in revitalizing a national reconciliation process. UNAMI cautions that, “as security improved in parts of Baghdad and other locations, it deteriorated elsewhere with heightened activity by insurgent groups and others in governorates such as Mosul and Diyala.” Armed groups and militia continue to target civilians or attack densely populated residential areas systematically and deliberately, causing horrific suffering.

The twelfth Quarterly Human Rights Report welcomes measures taken by the Government of Iraq and the judicial authorities to improve the handling of detainees, including efforts to ensure more effective judicial oversight and alleviate overcrowding. Additional and sustained efforts are needed, however, to address continuing prolonged delays in reviewing detainee cases; the lack of timely and adequate access to defense counsel for suspects; the failure to promptly and thoroughly investigate credible allegations of torture and to institute criminal proceedings against officials responsible for abusing detainees. UNAMI also recognizes the positive measures taken by Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to address a range of human rights issues. However, the detention of suspects for indefinite periods without charge remains of serious concern.

The plight of women across Iraq requires urgent measures to combat both gender-based violence, including so-called honor crimes, and to assist women who have been displaced with their children as a result of violent attacks perpetrated by armed groups and the sectarian violence in many parts of the country.

The MNF authorities introduced measures designed to improve the handling of detainees’ cases by expediting reviews and decisions on releases. However, UNAMI’s long-standing concerns with respect to due process rights of detainees within the legal framework adopted by the MNF remained unaddressed, and large numbers of juvenile detainees remain in MNF custody. UNAMI also remained concerned about civilian deaths resulting from actions by private security contractors and in the course of military operations conducted by the MNF-I.

Finally, UNAMI welcomes the Iraqi Government’s decision to ratify the UN Convention Against Torture.

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