

Iraqi Prisons: Women, Men and Children Routinely Tortured and Raped. The Perpetrators Walk Free

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Hamid Al-Mutlaq, Deputy Prime Minister and Member of the Defense and Security Committee alerted both Nouri Al-Maliki, Chief Commander of the Armed Forces, and Sadoon Al-Dulaimi, Defense Minister, about the torture in Iraqi prisons, and said that female prisoners are routinely raped by the prison guards. Al-Mutlaq said in a press conference held in the Parliament that there are many female prisoners who are tortured on a regular basis, and that Al-Maliki and Al-Dulaimi bear full responsibility. He also added that it's unacceptable that the perpetrating officers go unpunished for raping women, children and torturing them. He also mentioned the names of prisoners who died as a result of torture: Muhammad Khudair Ubaid, Muhammad Moohi Sharji, Ibrahim Adnan Salih, Mahmood Ubaid Jameel, Hamid Jameel, Fadil Abdullah, Omar Hisham, and Muhammad Jasim Mezhir.

Al-Mutlaq said the Iraqi army and security forces carry out many raids and arbitrarily arrest citizens to blackmail them to be released on bail. He said that the government and the Iraqi Parliament are responsible for this situation of lawlessness.

A security source revealed in August that the officers in the detention centers in Baghdad practice all kinds of torture on the prisoners, and many of them died as a result.

MP Hamid al-Mutlaq holds Nouri al-Maliki and the Supreme Judicial responsible for violations perpetrated against Iraqi women in prisons and demands the release of these female victims and asked why such shameful practices go unpunished.

Al Mutlaq: "The security situation has deteriorated to a limit that can not be tolerated as violation of women honor during arrests is done by the security services.

Mutlaq expressed his regret for arresting women and their daughters aged of 12 years on charges of terrorism.

This situation of lawlessness and rape of Iraqi female prisoners is becoming a big problem for Maliki, as more MP's, Civil Society organisations and the Iraqi people are denouncing the abuses of the Regime's security forces

Sheikh Sufian Omar al-Naimi, Emir of Naim tribes in Iraq, urged Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and Iraqi parliament speaker Osama Nujaifi to start an immediate investigation in the case of the Iraqi women detainees who are suffering of flagrant violations in the women prison in Baghdad.

He said in a press statement issued by his office on 25 November that "the appeals that we

receive from Iraqi jailed women on charges of multiple crimes mostly of terrorism are subjected to torture and rape”.

MP Khalid Abdullah al-Alwani called the Iraqi Government to open the women prisons for civil society organizations in order to provide the female inmates with services and to inspect their situations.

Alwanisaid “We condemn the government’s silence towards the torture and rape crimes that are practiced inside the women prisons.”

He urged the “officials to reveal the names of the perpetrators of these shameful acts, calling at the same time to give the guilty officers the maximum penalty”, and added that “our women’s honor is the honor of all Iraqis.”

Hundreds of citizens demonstrated on 26 November in downtown Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province, urging the government to proceed with the investigation of violation of human rights committed against women in detention centers.

Demonstrators waved banners calling on the government to open a serious investigation of those violations and the formation of a committee to examine the reality of female detainees situation in prisons and to distinguish between those who were arrested unjustly and terrorist elements.

A team of the Iraqi NGO Hammurabi Organization published on 21 October its first report about the dreadful situation in the women’s prison in Baghdad and its 31 prisoners sentenced to death on terrorism charges under Article 4. The report says women have been subjected to torture by electrocution, beatings, and rape by the investigators during interrogation. They had also been raped by the police and by the officers escorting them during the transfer from Tasfirat Jail to the women’s prison in Baghdad. Two members of the Hammurabi Organization, William Warda and Pascal Warda, former minister of environment, were authorized to visit the prison. They said that female prisoners in death rowsuffered from infectious diseases and scabies. “They receive no health care and are not allowed to bathe and can change clothes only once a month, which aggravates their health situation”. The NGO said that the children, imprisoned with their mothers, are “ticking time bombs that can explode any minute”.

The organization also said in its report that there are 21 children, some of them infants, living inside the women’s prison “suffering a punishment without committing any crime”. A total of 414 detainees are being held in the jail, varying in age from 20 to 65. Among the inmates were 18 women sentenced to death, and they all complained about neglect and violence in various ways.

Pascal Warda who led the Hammurabi Organization team said that the conditions of prisoners, convicted as suicide bombers, live in miserable and intolerable conditions.

The report quoted an unidentified judge as saying that there were “violations throughout the investigation process,” recommending that female security officers escort women prisoners to reduce the chance of abuse.

International human rights groups have on several occasions complained of persistent torture at Iraqi prisons being used to extract confessions from detainees, and also of the

continued use of secret jails.

Journalist Serene Assir, member of the BRussells Tribunal, accurately described on 08 March 2012 in *Iraqi Women: Resilience Amid Horror*(<http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/4957>) the situation of female prisoners and women in general in today's Iraq.

Thousands of women are currently in prison under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior or the US and UK-trained military. Others, according to veteran Iraqi activist Asma al-Haidari, languish in "secret prisons, headed by militias loyal to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki."

The use of torture and sexual abuse in prisons has become systematic in Iraq, al-Haidari said, thanks to training not only by the US and the UK, but also Israel and Iran.

While in detention, many women suffer rape and become mothers to children they never wanted. Some are raped in front of their husbands and children, as a way to humiliate the family and extract "confessions" from men suspected of resisting against a criminal regime. Some of the women are arrested and behind bars instead of their husbands.

The degradation of secularism in Iraqi society, under the weight of Iranian-trained and backed militias, has also given rise to new social dynamics, for which women paid the heaviest price.

It is hard to imagine just how the effects of a decade of oppression can be undone. For one, the dismantling of Iraq's state institutions in 2003 put hundreds of thousands of women out of work. A 2007 BRussells Tribunal dossier on women estimated that until 2003, 72 percent of public sector workers, including teachers, were women.

In spite of the damage, many Iraqi women have continued to take an active, even heroic role. "Iraqi women have been very resilient," said Zangana. "Since 2003, and increasingly since February 2011, women have been at the forefront of protests denouncing the occupation and the regime."

Violations of women rights and torture and rape of women has been introduced by the US Occupying Forces. In June 2010 the General Secretary of the Union of Political Prisoners and Detainees in Iraq, Muhammad Adham al-Hamd declared that the US occupation administration in Iraq relied on systematic rape, torture, and sadistic treatment of Iraqi women prisoners in its prison camps in the country. Al-Hamd said that the enormous crimes being committed against women in the prison camps in occupied Iraq had the support and blessings of the US military, for whom the practices served as a means to bring psychological pressure on men engaged in the Resistance, in an attempt to break their spirit and fighting will.

Muhammad Adham al-Hamd made the comments in a statement regarding reports that confirmed the presence of large numbers of women in the American-run prison camps – women who are detained solely to be raped and abused in order to bring pressure upon their husbands, brothers, sons or fathers.

Years of US/UK occupation of Iraq have affected Iraq's social fabric and contributed to a serious deterioration of Iraqi women's rights. As a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Government of Iraq (GoI) should urgently take

the necessary measures to improve gender equality and women's rights.

The US and UK must be held accountable for this deterioration, for the destruction of Iraq's social fabric and for all other crimes against humanity they have inflicted upon the people of Iraq.

***Dirk Adriaensens** is coordinator of SOS Iraq and member of the executive committee of the BRussells Tribunal. Between 1992 and 2003 he led several delegations to Iraq to observe the devastating effects of UN imposed sanctions. He was a member of the International Organizing Committee of the World Tribunal on Iraq (2003-2005). He is also co-coordinator of the Global Campaign Against the Assassination of Iraqi Academics. He is co-author of Rendez-Vous in Baghdad, EPO (1994), Cultural Cleansing in Iraq, Pluto Press, London (2010), Beyond Educide, Academia Press, Ghent (2012), and is a frequent contributor to GlobalResearch, Truthout, The International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies and other media.*

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