



BAR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMITTEE OF
ENGLAND AND WALES

7 November 2011

The Bar Human Rights Committee (BHRC) condemns a decision by the Iraqi government to close Camp Ashraf, home to 3,400 Iranian refugees, including over 1,000 women in the Diyala province of Iraq by the end of 2011. Based on previous interventions by Iraqi security forces, the BHRC understands that were the Iraqi government to proceed with its plan, the camp's residents would face serious breaches of their human rights, including the very likely possibility of injury and death.

In April of this year, the camp's residents, all of whom are recognised as Protected Persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention, were attacked by Iraqi forces that shot at them indiscriminately. Thirty-four camp members were killed, including eight women. Over 300 people were injured, 178 of whom sustained gunshot wounds.

The BHRC is deeply concerned that Iraq is pursuing an ominous plan to forcibly relocate the residents of Camp Ashraf in December. This has been evidenced by recent comments made by Iraq's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister reiterating their plan to close the camp by the end of this year. Any such attempt at forcible displacement is unlawful and is condemned by the BHRC. The BHRC urges the UNHCR, UK, US and EU governments to condemn the deadline set by the Iraqi government and ensure its delay.

The BHRC supports the action of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in recognising the residents of Camp Ashraf as refugees and urges the international community, specifically the United Nations Secretary General, the British, European and US governments to support the UNHCR in facilitating the refugee status process and to swiftly accept all residents which have been recognised as refugees. The actions of the Iraqi government in stalling this process can only be counteracted with international support.

It is of paramount importance that the men and women inside the camp are protected from further attacks while the UNHCR carries out its work. As US forces are due to leave Iraq in December 2011, the BHRC considers the only practical step to be that protection is undertaken by a United Nations team until such time as UNHCR has carried out its work.

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The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales is the international human rights arm of the Bar of England and Wales. It is an independent body concerned with defending the rule of law and internationally recognised legal standards relating to human rights and the right to a fair trial.

For more information please email the BHRC in London, UK at bhrc@compuserve.com.