

# REDRESS

*Seeking Reparation for Torture Survivors*

## UK ARMY TORTURE IN IRAQ MUST BE INVESTIGATED

### PRESS STATEMENT

[LONDON 4 October 2007]

REDRESS, the international human rights organisation with a mandate to help torture survivors obtain justice, has this week released a new Report entitled **UK ARMY IN IRAQ: Time To Come Clean On Civilian Torture**, exposing serious failures in the way civilian detention was planned prior to the invasion, contributing to an atmosphere in which torture and ill-treatment occurred.

One of the most appalling incidents resulted in the death of Baha Mousa some thirty-six hours after British soldiers took him into custody in September 2003. The Report considers his death and other killings of Iraqi civilians, and analyses the responses of the UK Government. It looks closely at the court martial arising from Baha Mousa's death, in which all those charged were acquitted, apart from one soldier who pleaded guilty to a charge of inhuman treatment.

The Report also examines the House of Lords Appellate Committee decision in *Al Skeini v SSD* which ruled that the UK Government is obliged to carry out an effective (European Convention on Human Rights compliant) investigation into the death of Baha Mousa. When litigation commenced in the UK in 2004 in this case REDRESS was the first and initially only NGO which made a third-party intervention supporting the claim.

***"It is now clearer than ever that until there is a proper inquiry into Baha Mousa's death and the whole civilian detention programme a lot of legitimate questions will remain unanswered,"*** said Carla Ferstman, REDRESS' Director.

***"Nobody in the Government, the Army, or the Civil Service, has to date accepted a shred of responsibility for the use of banned interrogation techniques used on Baha Mousa and others – techniques outlawed since 1972. It is outrageous, and severely tarnishes this country's human rights record."***

The Report draws attention to a number of specific issues, including:

- Authorisation for the use of the banned interrogation techniques
- Use of US forces in the 'conditioning' of civilian detainees under British jurisdiction - most likely using even harsher techniques
- Confusion over the ban at Permanent Joint Headquarters for around a year
- Problems with intelligence and computer communication systems containing important orders, leading to some units not knowing what was and was not permissible treatment
- Problems with the US during joint planning

- Transfer of British-held detainees to the Iraqi criminal justice system despite its lack of capacity to protect their rights
- Lack of resources to enable Battle Groups to quickly transfer detainees to central internment facilities
- Short notice periods for units deploying to Iraq which impacted on training, especially detainee handling and medical oversight of detainees
- Inadequate policy and doctrine on detainee handling
- Lack of involvement of UK Government Departments during the Occupation, burdening the already over-stretched British Army with further tasks;

REDRESS argues that the inquiry needs to be independent of the Government, and must examine each and every credible allegation of civilian abuse. Along with the litigation which is continuing, sustained pressure from inside and outside of Parliament will hopefully lead to a proper resolution of the concerns which to date have not been adequately addressed. Until then the legacy of UK abuses of Iraqi civilians will remain a dark one for the British Army and the UK as a whole, but even more significantly for the civilians who suffered and in some cases did not survive.

The Report has been submitted to the UK Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights which is currently investigating the treatment of Iraqi civilians by UK troops, in the context of its continuing scrutiny of the Government meeting its obligations under the UN Convention against Torture. It has also been submitted to the Commons Defence Committee for their oral evidence session with the Secretary of State for Defence, Mr Des Browne, later in October 2007.

The Report can be accessed at: [http://www.redress.org/publications/UK\\_ARMY\\_IN\\_IRAQ\\_-\\_TIME\\_TO\\_COME\\_CLEAN\\_ON\\_CIVILIAN\\_TORTURE\\_Oct%2007.pdf](http://www.redress.org/publications/UK_ARMY_IN_IRAQ_-_TIME_TO_COME_CLEAN_ON_CIVILIAN_TORTURE_Oct%2007.pdf)

**Note:** REDRESS was founded by a British torture survivor in 1992. Since then, it has consistently fought for the rights of torture survivors and their families in the UK and abroad. It takes legal challenges on behalf of survivors, works to ensure that torturers are punished and that survivors and their families obtain remedies for their suffering. REDRESS cooperates with civil society groups around the world to eradicate the practice of torture once and for all and to ensure that survivors can move forward with their lives in dignity. It has intervened in a range of leading torture cases. More information on our work is available on our website: [www.redress.org](http://www.redress.org).

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