

22 July 2016

## STATEMENT

# BHRC express concern and shock over attacks on Camp Liberty

The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) expresses its deep concern and shock at the 4 July rocket attack on Camp Liberty in Baghdad, which is home to large numbers of Iranian exiles.

This attack led to some 50 injuries and material damage, according to residents. Five injured residents were transferred to Baghdad hospitals, while the remainder were treated at the camp clinic. A spokesman for the Ministry of the Interior has confirmed that Camp Liberty was “hit by rockets”.

Kirsty Brimelow QC, Chairwoman of the Bar Human Rights Committee said:

“BHRC condemns the missile attacks upon the defenceless people of Camp Liberty. BHRC reiterates its request to the UN that Camp Liberty be recognised as a refugee camp under the supervision of the UN High Commission for Refugees. The UN Human Rights Council already considers these refugees “persons of concern”.

Practical steps must now be taken by the UN and by the Iraqi government to protect these vulnerable people. Whilst statements are welcome, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and member of the Human Rights Council, the UK must actually act to hold the Iraqi authorities to account over this latest attacks.”

In early 2015 BHRC wrote an open letter which declared that the Government of Iraq has consistently failed to meet its obligations to respect the humanitarian and human rights of the refugees at the camp and to provide them with security and protection as agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2011 with UNAMI. The refugees had been targeted by numerous deadly missile attacks and the current attack appears to be an escalation. Their position is akin to persons in a large detention facility, which is then attacked at will. This was followed by a further letter from BHRC dated 30 October 2015.

BHRC has condemned on several other occasions the attacks against unarmed refugees both at Camp Ashraf and Camp Liberty, including those perpetrated by Iraqi security personnel and also militias affiliated to the then Prime Minister al-Maliki. The position of MEK refugees at the Camp,

originally welcomed into Iraq but then refused status following a newfound alliance with Iran leaves them in a desperate and isolated situation and a worsening of their terrible living conditions.

BHRC joins with the International Parliamentary Campaign in Defence of Ashraf (IPCDA) and the British Parliamentary Committee for Iran Freedom (BPCIF) in their Press Statements of 4 July, and with Amnesty International in its Public Statement of 6 July 2016, in strongly condemning this latest attack, and demanding an independent, impartial and prompt investigation. BHRC regrets the failure to investigate adequately previous attacks on the camp. This has sent the message that the camp can be attacked with impunity.

Residents also complained to Amnesty International about their desperate living conditions, in particular that Iraqi security forces had prevented the delivery of food, medicine and fuel in the eight days preceding the attack.

BHRC also calls upon the Iraqi authorities to ensure that electricity and other essential services to the camp are restored, that access to basic necessities is not impeded, and that those whose homes were destroyed in the attack are provided with adequate temporary shelter without delay.

**ENDS.**

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

1. For an interview with a spokesperson, please contact Ed Gillett, Coordinator, on +44 (0)7854 197862
2. For more information on the Bar Human Rights Committee (BHRC), visit our website at <http://www.barhumanrights.org.uk>
3. The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) is the international human rights arm of the Bar of England and Wales, working to protect the rights of advocates, judges and human rights defenders around the world. The BHRC is concerned with defending the rule of law and internationally recognised legal standards relating to human rights and the right to a fair trial. It is independent of the Bar Council.