



Human Rights Without Frontiers Int.

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IRAQ : Political Reconstruction and Ethnic Issues

Give Iraqis back the control of their country

Concludes a mission of Human Rights Without Frontiers upon its return from Iraq

HRWF Int. (05.11.2003) - Website: www.hrwf.net - Email: info@hrwf.net - Upon return from a twelve-day investigatory fact-finding mission in Iraq, a team of *Human Rights Without Frontiers* pleads for a rapid transfer of administrative governance of the country to the Iraqis, the creation of a temporary Iraqi government and the drafting of a Constitution within a reasonable time.

The goal of the mission was twofold :

- to evaluate in what measure and under what form the political actors and the future craftsmen of the Constitution were attempting to best guarantee the rights of ethnic and religious communities as well as their harmonious coexistence at the national and regional levels;
- to evaluate whether the structures put in place by the coalition forces and the governance of the country by the American forces contribute to this objective.

Due to the extremely violent recent attacks perpetrated (*) in Baghdad, the question is now posed whether it is not necessary to listen more attentively to the voice of the Iraqis, who consider that the time has come to put an end to their purely consultative status to which they have been reduced and to entrust them with the responsibility for the security and the battle against terrorism in the field. They consider, in fact, that this fight lies more in their competence, given their knowledge of the field, the language, the local customs and of existing networks. This battle could not, nevertheless, be effective without an adequate technical re-equipment of their police and intelligence forces. It would also imply their complete taking over of the judiciary and the penitentiary system. This process of transfer should also be coupled with the re-establishment of Iraqi executive power.

The members of the mission visited Baghdad, the principal cities in the north of the country (Dohuk, Mossul, Kirkuk) and the surrounding villages. They visited police stations. In Kirkuk, they took photographs of prisoners condemned for acts of terrorism, filmed a women's cell and conducted interviews.

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They traveled close to 2000 kilometers on Iraqi roads, crossing sensitive regions such as the "Sunni triangle," a stronghold of the Sunni opposition situated to the north and west of Baghdad, Tigris, Samarra, passed along the Shiite district of the capital, formerly known as Saddam City and renamed Sadr City after the name of an emblematic figure of the Shiite movement. They met with close to 200 people of different ethnic and religious groups (Assyro-Chaldeans, Turkmen, Kurds, Arabs, Yezidis, etc.): lawyers, representatives of Iraqi human rights and women's rights associations, leaders of political parties, religious authorities, mayors and municipal counsellors, police officers, representatives of the American authorities, the ambassador to France, etc.

Detailed reports from the mission will follow shortly.

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(*) For a small terrorism operation, the backers pay \$600 USD. The head of an American soldier is worth \$100 USD.
