



PRESS RELEASE

UK war crimes in Iraq probe: ICC prosecutors move to next stage in assessment of UK forces

Berlin, 5 December 2017 - The opening of a formal investigation into UK forces is now one step closer as prosecutors at the International Criminal Court in The Hague progress to the next phase of their preliminary examination into war crimes committed by UK forces in Iraq.

On 4 December 2017 the Court's Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) [announced](#) that it sees a reasonable basis to believe that members of the UK armed forces committed war crimes against detainees in Iraq. Prosecutors in The Hague will now move to what it refers to as Phase 3 of the proceedings, examining issues of gravity and [complementarity](#). The complementarity assessment will consider whether genuine investigations and prosecutions are being conducted in the UK.

“The UK government backed by the press has gone to great lengths to shut down domestic investigations into serious allegations of war crimes in Iraq. We welcome the latest news from the International Criminal Court and expect the Prosecutor will move to open a formal investigation,” said Wolfgang Kaleck, ECCHR General Secretary.

In May 2014 the OTP reopened its review of crimes potentially committed by UK forces in Iraq. This decision came after extensive evidence was submitted by ECCHR and the UK organization Public Interest Lawyers (PIL) on the systematic abuse of detainees in UK detention in Iraq between 2003 and 2008. In a 250-page [dossier](#) the groups put forward 85 representative cases of abuse of 109 individuals along with extensive witness statements and substantiating documentation such as medical and detention records, detailing how detainees were subjected to techniques including physical assault, hooding, electric shocks, stress positions and deprivation of food, water and sleep. The dossier also presented corroborative evidence from independent UK inquiries, court findings and NGO reports.

In June and September 2017 ECCHR filed [follow-up submissions](#) outlining new evidence that has emerged since 2014. These filings also highlighted the UK government's recent efforts to shut down domestic proceedings and avoid any investigations into the abuse of detainees by British forces in Iraq.

More information on ECCHR's communication and submissions to the ICC available at: [ECCHR/InternationalCrimes/UK](#)

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