



PRESS RELEASE

Torture in Iraq: ICC investigations into British military represent milestone for international justice

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Berlin, 13 May 2014 – The European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) welcomes the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague to reopen preliminary investigations into the liability of British military officials for the torture of detainees in Iraq. “The reopening of the investigation represents a milestone for Iraqi victims and for international criminal law”, said ECCHR General Secretary Wolfgang Kaleck. “The double standards must come to an end. Those who violate human rights must be brought to justice regardless of how powerful they may be”. ECCHR now hopes to see genuine investigations undertaken – whether by the prosecution at the ICC or by the British judiciary. Kaleck stressed that the investigations should not be directed solely against low-ranking suspects. “There must also be an examination of the role of senior military and political figures. They are the ones most liable for the systematic torture carried out. Ten years after the war it is time they were finally held accountable”.

On 10 January 2014 ECCHR and Birmingham based group Public Interest Lawyers lodged a criminal complaint ('communication') with the prosecution authorities at the ICC. The complainants called for investigations to be opened into the liability under international criminal law of senior members of the British military as well as former defense heads and state secretaries within the Ministry of Defence for the systematic torture and abuse of Iraqi detainees by members of the British military between 2003 and 2008.

Over the past years more than 400 former Iraqi detainees have come to PIL giving accounts of grave abuse and degrading treatment at the hands of British soldiers. While these accusations have long been public knowledge and the subject of a number of state commissions of inquiry, British authorities have to date failed to conduct the appropriate criminal proceedings.

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