

# Human Rights Watch

## Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/18/iraq-torture-persists-mosul-jail>

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(Erbil, April 18, 2019) [Iraqi](#) officers have committed torture at a detention facility in Mosul at least through early 2019, months after Human Rights Watch reported on the abuses and shared information about those responsible, Human Rights Watch said today. The Iraqi government did not respond to two Human Rights Watch letters requesting an update on steps taken to investigate the allegations.

If the Iraqi government ignores credible reports of torture, its no wonder that the abuses persist, said [Lama Fakih](#), deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. What will it take for the authorities to take torture allegations seriously.

In August 2018, [Human Rights Watch published a report](#) alleging the use of torture in three facilities under the Interior Ministry in and around Mosul. It was based on statements from two former detainees and the father of a man who died during interrogation. One former detainee, who was held at the Faisaliya detention facility for four months, provided Human Rights Watch with the names of four interior ministry officers whom he said he saw torturing detainees.

Before publishing its report, Human Rights Watch sent detailed allegations including the names of the four officers implicated to the human rights adviser in the Prime Ministers Advisory Commission. In February, Human Rights Watch wrote to Foreign Minister Mohamed Alhakim and the Interior Ministry Inspector General, Jamal al-Asadi, asking whether the government had investigated the Human Rights Watch allegations. Human Rights Watch received no reply to either letter.

A former prisoner, whose name and identifying details have been withheld for his security, described what he saw at Faisaliya detention facility in early 2019.

He said that guards took him to a section behind a metal door cut off from the rest of the cells on the evening he arrived. His description matched that of other former detainees who spoke to Human Rights Watch.

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Diagram of the cells where Mahmoud said he was held in Faisaliya Prison from January until May, 2018 2018 John Holmes for Human Rights Watch

He said he saw eight detainees standing naked. Four guards were throwing water at them from a bucket, after which they pushed the detainees to the floor one by one, lifted their legs, and placed their feet through two rope loops attached to a wooden stick to keep the feet in place. He said he watched as the guards took turns beating each of the detainees on their feet with plastic piping for about 15 minutes nonstop. He said that after the beatings, six of the detainees confessed to being affiliated with the Islamic State (ISIS), with each negotiating the length of their membership they would confess.

[The guards used a form of waterboarding](#), referred to as *al-safina* (boat in Arabic) on the two detainees who had not confessed, he said. Five guards and an officer strapped each detainee in turn, still naked, onto an orange gurney and tipped it backward, so that the detainees feet were raised above his head and covered his face with a towel. For about five minutes, they beat each one with plastic piping while pouring water over his mouth.

He said that the guards then bound the mens hands behind their backs and suspended them from the ceiling using a hook and pulley, in a position referred to as [bazoona \(the word for cat in Iraqi dialect\)](#) for about one hour. He said the men had all confessed by around 2 a.m. and were taken back to their cell.

An hour later, he said, when he and the 12 other detainees were in the group cell he shared lying down, three or four guards came in and stamped on them with their boots, while singing a well-known ISIS song.

He named three of the four Interior Ministry officers overseeing that section of the detention facility, whom Human Rights Watch had identified in its August report. He also gave the name of another officer he said had overseen the torture. He said that all four officers directly participated in the torture.

Iraqi judges, despite the extensive credible reports of torture in detention, routinely [fail to investigate torture allegations](#). On April 1, 2019, Iraqs High Judicial Council replied to a Human Rights Watch inquiry into the judiciarys response to torture allegations, stating that a range of Iraqi courts had investigated 275 complaints against investigative officers by the end of 2018. The High Judicial Council stated that 176 of the cases have been resolved while 99 were still being addressed. The council did not indicate how many of the 176 cases were being further investigated or had been dismissed.

Inspector General Jamal al-Asadi should promptly investigate the allegations at Faisaliya detention facility, including the officers implicated in past Human Rights Watch reporting

Iraqs [High Judicial Council should issue guidelines](#) on the steps judges are obliged to take when a defendant alleges torture. Judges should investigate all credible allegations of torture and the security forces responsible, and order transfers of detainees to different facilities immediately after they allege torture or ill-treatment, to protect them from retaliation. Parliament should pass the draft Anti-Torture Law, which would require judges to order a medical examination of any detainee alleging torture within 24 hours of learning of the allegation.

Iraqs foreign minister should also urge parliament to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, which would allow prison visits by the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention. Pending ratification, the government should commit to setting up a national unit to prevent torture, known as a national prevention mechanism, with the authority to inspect all detention centers in Iraq and to set up an effective complaint systems for authorities and facilities involved in detention and interrogations.

The heads of the federal intelligence agency, NSS, and the new interior minister, once appointed, should issue statements to their subordinates prohibiting the use of torture and other ill-treatment, and making clear that they will punish those responsible. Prime

Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi should publicly condemn the use of torture by all law enforcement, security, and military personnel.

Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdis government should demonstrate to the Iraqi people that it is serious about ending torture in Iraqs detention facilities, Fakih said. Strong actions are needed.

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