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Human Rights Watch Statement UPR outcome report on Iraq

June 11, 2010

Human Rights Watch largely welcomes Iraq's responses to the UN member states broad range of recommendations regarding necessary steps to protect human rights, as part of Iraq's Universal Periodic Review.

The Government of Iraq has stated that it supports most of the recommendations on various issues including: arbitrary detention; torture and inhuman treatment of detainees; violence against vulnerable groups, particularly women and minorities; the plight of internally displaced persons; and abridged freedom of expression. We commend Iraq for supporting these recommendations but note that the real test will be how and when authorities implement them.

Human Rights Watch welcomes Iraq's pledge to complete the procedures for ratifying the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The Government should move quickly in this regard, particularly in light of evidence uncovered in April that detainees in a secret Baghdad detention facility were hung upside-down, deprived of air, kicked, whipped, beaten, subjected to electric shocks, and sodomized. Most of the 300 detainees seen by Human Rights Watch in Baghdad displayed fresh scars and injuries they said were a result of routine and systematic torture they had experienced at the hands of interrogators. Reports of widespread torture and other detainee abuse in facilities in other Iraqi facilities continue.

The Government should also commit to fully implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as well as repeal articles from the Iraqi penal code that identify the commission of an offence "with honourable motives" as a mitigating excuse. Violence against women and girls across Iraq remains a serious problem. Even in high-profile cases, prosecutions are rare. Militias operating in Basra and Baghdad have specifically targeted female politicians, civil servants, journalists,

and rights activists. They have also attacked women on the street for what they consider “immoral” or “un-Islamic” behavior and dress. “Honor” killings by family members remain a serious physical threat to women and girls in Iraq.

Human Rights Watch regrets that the Government did not support recommendations that it fully investigate allegations of persecution based on sexual orientation and that it prosecute perpetrators. Iraqi security forces did little to investigate or halt the killing campaign that spread across much of Iraq last year against men suspected of being gay, or of not being sufficiently “masculine”.

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