

Query response a-6973 of 16 October 2009

Iraq: Treatment of prisoners of war during the Iran-Iraq war

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This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status, asylum or other form of international protection.

Please read in full all documents referred to.

Non-English language information is comprehensively summarised in English. Original language quotations are provided for reference.

Despite the existence of comprehensive literature on the Iran-Iraq war, little information exceeding the information contained in the two UN Security Council (UNSC) reports cited below could be found, as a vast majority of all reports published consecutively is based on these two sources, with a distinct focus on the 1985 UNSC report. Commenting upon the availability of sources, the T.M.C. Asser Instituut states in a compilation of 1992 on the Iran-Iraq war that

„[t]he two missions [by the UN Secretary-General in 1985 and 1988] are a most valuable source of information, which complete the materials already available in the ICRC's publications.“ (T.M.C. Asser Instituut, 1992, p. 131)

However, due to a lack of information by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) accessible to us, statements by the ICRC are only reflected via secondary sources.

Policies of Iraq regarding POWs

The following UNSC report chapters offer insights into statements of Iraqi authorities regarding their policies on POWs: UNSC, 22 February 1985, p. 18ff; UNSC, 24 August 1988, p. 23

Number of POWs and registration

Information on the number of POWs, their registration by the ICRC and problems therewith can be found in the following sections of the UNSC reports: UNSC, 22 February 1985, p. 47; UNSC, 24 August 1988, p. 27f

According to a report by the Guardian of September 1988 and a Los Angeles Times Article of November 1988 based on ICRC figures, there were about 19,000 registered POWs and possibly up to 40,000 unregistered persons in Iraq in 1988. Additionally, both sides had accused each other of operating secret camps:

„The International Committee of the Red Cross has seen and registered 50,000 PoWs held in Iran and 19,000 in Iraq, but the number of captives on both sides is known to be much higher. The Iraqis are thought to have taken up to 40,000 additional prisoners in their military advances prior to and immediately after Iran's ceasefire acceptance last month. Iran is believed to be holding more than 7,000 additional PoWs to whom the ICRC has not been given access since 1984. In addition, both sides have accused the other of holding unregistered prisoners at secret camps. The accusations have been accompanied by allegations of psychological and physical torture and indoctrination. Western sources in Baghdad are only able to say that the condition of those PoWs who have been registered do not give rise to serious concern.“ (The Guardian, 1 September 1988)

„The Red Cross has registered names of 50,182 Iraqi and 19,284 Iranian POWs, but it estimates the total number on both sides at 100,000.“ (Los Angeles Times, 28 November 1988)

According to a Washington Post report of March 1990 based on ICRC figures, approximately 19,000 registered POWs had been staying in Iraq towards the end of the war, with another 20,000 POWs in Iraq being unregistered. Except for POWs captured after early 1987, visits by the ICRC to the Iraqi POW camps were in accordance with ICRC criteria:

„The International Committee of the Red Cross says it has been able to see and register 69,082 POWs -- 18,901 Iranians and 50,182 Iraqis. But international relief workers and diplomats in the region who followed the conflict say they believe each side holds another 20,000 prisoners. [...] Since the war began in 1980, only 969 Iranian and 1,343 Iraqi sick and wounded POWs have been returned, according to ICRC records. There are still "hundreds" in this category in the camps, one source said. Only the 18,901 Iranians held by Iraq are receiving regular visits by the ICRC, its records show. No Iraqi POWs have been seen by ICRC officials since early 1988, when the ICRC halted visits to camps there, citing restrictions imposed by Iran. [...] The ICRC said visits to POW camps in Iran began early in the war but were interrupted in October 1984. They resumed in December 1986, but the ICRC "was compelled by the Iranian authorities to carry out these visits within a restrictive interpretation of [the Geneva Conventions], in particular in the number of delegates it could send and the frequency of visits," a report said. In Iraq, the ICRC said, it has received more cooperation. According to its report, the ICRC has visited POW camps there regularly since September 1980 and for the most part, the visits were carried out "in full accordance with ICRC criteria," which include being able to interview prisoners in private. However, Iraq has prevented the ICRC from seeing Iranian POWs captured after early 1987 in retaliation for Iranian restrictions on ICRC activities there.“ (The Washington Post, 14 March 1990)

In a retrospective analysis of November 2007, the Crimes of War Project describes the ICRC's efforts as less successful, and offers a brief insight into the ICRC's often futile efforts of organising and conducting POW repatriations after the war:

„Particularly troublesome for the ICRC was both sides' penchant for interfering in its usually cut-and-dried procedures. Both Iran and Iraq frustrated the ICRC's tracing of prisoners of war and the identification of the missing and dead, thus enormously complicating postwar efforts to sort out who had survived and delaying repatriation. [...]

Even after the fighting ended in 1988, no significant prisoner repatriation took place for two more years despite the cease-fire's provisions for their immediate return and persistent ICRC prodding. (In 1990 Saddam relented to improve relations with Iran as Iraq braced for the U.S.-led coalition to wrest back Kuwait.) When finally some forty thousand men from each side were sent home, the exchanges violated ICRC regulations against such one-for-one prisoner releases.

A decade after the war's last shot was fired, all prisoners were still not back home. But in April 1998 Iran, in a fresh bid to improve relations with the Arab world and break out of two decades of isolation, repatriated some six thousand Iraqi prisoners of war. ICRC officials who visited prisoners of war in Iran reported many of the remaining twelve thousand official detainees looked twenty years older than their actual age. Many had long since joined the Badr Brigade and feared that going home would entail reprisal.“ (Crimes of War Project, 17 November 2007)

Situation in camps¹

On the general situation in POW camps, see also the following UNSC report chapters: UNSC, 22 February 1985 p. 34ff; UNSC, 24 August 1988, p. 24ff and p. 32

An article by the Australian newspaper Sydney Morning Herald of August 1988 reflects upon the situation in POW camps as depicted by the UNSC 1985 report, and adds statements by the Iranian head of a committee on POWs in Iraq on inadequate medical and sanitary facilities for Iranian POWs, Iranian civilians held as prisoners of war and the existence of secret military camps for POWs in Iraq:

„In 1985, a report by the UN Secretary-General's office on the prisoner issue said: "In neither country are the POWs treated as badly as alleged by the government of the other country; nor, on the other hand, are they treated in either as well as claimed by the government of the detaining power. The existing situation on both sides is cause for serious concern." The UN report said that problems of the prisoners were similar in both countries. It listed "difficult living conditions, frequent harsh treatment -such as excessive use of force by some camp guards, particularly in Iraq -incidents marked by violence,

¹ The following chapter contains information on camps for POW only. Regarding the situation in camps for civilians, see the following UNSC report sections: UNSC, 22 February 1985, p. 26ff; UNSC, 24 August 1988, p. 28ff and p. 32

isolation from the outside world and uncertainty about the length of their captivity". Mr Mahmoud Aghamiri, an Iranian who heads a committee keeping track of the men held by Iraq, repeated his Government's charges that 30,000 Iranians were unaccounted for and were being kept in secret military camps in Iraq. Mr Aghamiri also alleged Iranian prisoners were deprived of "basic medical and sanitary facilities in Iraq". Iran maintains that during the initial invasion of Iran in 1980, the Iraqis captured "tens of thousands of civilians", who were transported into Iraq and held as prisoners of war. The civilian "non-combatant" prisoners are said to include Iran's Oil Minister, Mr Mohammed Javad Tondguyan, and his staff." (Sydney Morning Herald, 9 August 1988)

A United Press International release of September 1988 summarises the findings of the 1988 UNSC report on the situation in Iraqi POW camps as follows:

„The team investigated allegations that Iran committed "atrocities, torture or beatings" against Iraqi prisoners, but said it found insufficient evidence to confirm or dismiss the allegations. Physical conditions appeared to be satisfactory in the five Iranian camps and in three of the four Iraqi camps visited, it said. The exception was Camp 4 in Iraq's Mosul region, where serious overcrowding and insufficient toilet facilities posed health risks, the report said. Boys as young as 13 were found among the Iranian POWs, but Iraqi authorities said they were to be transferred to a camp with schools. The team also voiced concern that Iranian POWs at Camp 9 in Ramadi were punished after talking to members of the mission. Iraqi authorities responded that the reprisals were against policy and that camp commanders would be disciplined. Some Iranian POWs expressed fear that "spies" among them would report to camp commanders their various loyalties to the shah, who was ousted by the Khomeini regime, or to the Mojahedin-e Khalq, an anti-Khomeini guerrilla organization." (United Press International , 2 September 1988)

In February 1989, the British newspaper The Independent reports that the situation of Iranian POWs had worsened since July 1988 due to overcrowding of facilities and that they were subject to indiscriminate beatings, exposure to heat, cold and lack of food. The article furthermore describes the system of POW allocation to different camps:

„Conditions have worsened on the Iraqi side over the past six months, because Baghdad's offensive last July - weeks before the ceasefire on 20 August - doubled the number of Iranian PoWs to at least 30,000, who must be accommodated in dormitories meant for half that number. The Iraqi embassy in London denied claims of overcrowding and beatings, but would not say how many prisoners there were. All Iraq's newly-captured prisoners spend up to a year in special camps, where their will is broken by means of indiscriminate beatings, exposure to heat, cold and lack of food. They are then distributed to complexes round the country. Half are held in a huge camp at Ramadi, 70 miles east of Baghdad, where 60 or more sleep in rooms built for 40. Aged from 14 to 88, they range from sympathisers of the Baghdad-based Mujahedin to fervent supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini. They suffer freezing temperatures in winter, with only the thin clothes and bedding issued to them, and although food is generally adequate, many are underweight. There have been repeated, unprovoked attacks by guards on prisoners at Ramadi, including beatings of 14-year-old boys. The Swiss children's charity, Terre des Hommes -

the only non-governmental organisation permanently in the camp - runs the only education scheme for PoWs in Iraq. They can study a dozen subjects including French, English, Arabic, Farsi and drama. Terre des Hommes pays the salaries of Iraqi teachers, some of whom have attacked their pupils. The charity's relations with the authorities are strained, but it is determined to stay until the prisoners are freed." (The Independent, 25 February 1989)

In March 1990, the Washington Post cites the 1988 UNSC report, according to which ill-treatment as a consequence of guard violence and the frustrations of idleness and strict discipline were problems in POW camps in Iraq:

„The ICRC's pledge of confidentiality prevents it from publicizing conditions in POW camps. But U.N. teams have twice visited some of the sites, most recently in mid-1988. In its report on that trip, the team called camp conditions in both countries "generally acceptable." However, the team said that in Iran, the "psychological conditions [of the POWs] remain for us a matter of concern." The mission noted "the very strong religious and political influence, which is called 'spiritual guidance.' To us, it is indistinguishable from mental pressure." As for Iranian prisoners in Iraq, the U.N. team mentioned problems with "ill-treatment as a consequence of guard violence" and the frustrations of idleness and strict discipline." (The Washington Post, 14 March 1990)

The following media report by the Christian Science Monitor (CSM) from July 1987 provides information about Camp No. 7, a special PoW camp for children:

- CSM – Christian Science Monitor: For Iran's child soldiers, capture by the Iraqis is a mixed blessing, 7 July 1987 (available on LexisNexis; see attachment)

Mistreatment and killings of POWs

The following report chapters of the UN Security Council reports of 1985 and 1988 contain details on abuse and (summary) killings of Iranian PoWs in Iraq: UNSC, 22 February 1985, p. 20ff and p. 31ff; UNSC, 24 August 1988, p. 30

In statements by the Iranian Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) of February 1987 and the Iraqi News Agency of September 1989, the states commented as follows on the situation of their own POWs in the other country and their treatment of the other country's POWs:

„Meanwhile, head of the commission to support Iranian POWs and those missing in action, reported on the situation of Iranian POWs in Iraqi camps. Quoting reports of the International Committee of the Red Cross for 1984-85, he said Iranian POWs were suffering from malnutrition, lack of hot water and room in these camps. He said some 1,500 Iranian POWs are being kept only in half of the Ammar camp which only holds a total of 720 persons. Contrary to the Geneva conventions, Iranian POWs are not being paid for their work and, moreover, music is played daily and disgusting films shown for 16 hours, a move he said was designed to torture the POWs mentally." (IRNA, 2 February 1987)

„The Iraqi mission to the United Nations has accused Iran of "fabrications that have no foundation in truth" on the subject of the treatment of Iranian prisoners of war in Iraq. In a letter addressed to UN Secretary- General Javier Perez de Cuellar, which was distributed to the Security Council today [8th September], charge d'affaires of the Iraqi UN mission Sabah Tal'at Kadrat stated that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations are fully aware of the situation of Iranian prisoners of war in Iraq because of the regular monthly visits carried out by the ICRC delegation in Baghdad to the camps in which Iranian prisoners are held. Responding to allegation made in an Iranian letter to the United Nations, the Iraqi ambassador noted that Iraq adheres strictly to humanitarian values and international instruments, including the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war.“ (Iraqi News Agency, 8 September 1989)

Already in May 1983, the Xinhua news agency and the New York Times (NYT) reported that the ICRC had accused the governments of Iran and Iraq, amongst other breaches of the Geneva conventions, of summary executions of POWs:

„the international committee of the red cross (icrc) today lodged a strong protest against iran and iraq over their treatment of prisoners of war in the gulf conflict which broke out in 1980. h a press release of the icrc accused the governments of the two countries of "summary execution of captive soldiers, abandoning of enemy wounded on the battlefield and indiscriminate bombardment of towns and villages". the icrc appealed to all signatory countries of the geneva conventions "to make every effort to see that international humanitarian law is applied and these violations affecting tens of thousands of persons cease". iran and iraq signed the four geneva conventions in 1957 and 1956 respectively. h the icrc protest is deemed as particularly significant since the gulf war has resulted in the capture of 60,000 prisoners, more than in any international conflict since 1971.“ (Xinhua General News Service, 11 May 1983)

"The International Committee of the Red Cross said today that both Iran and Iraq had violated international law in their treatment of war prisoners. It accused the two countries of "summary executions of captive soldiers, abandoning of enemy wounded on the battlefield and indiscriminate bombardment of towns and villages." The statement was an unusual departure from Red Cross practice of not making charges public. The private, all-Swiss committee said it had decided to speak out because Iran and Iraq had ignored appeals to cease "grave and repeated violations of international humanitarian law" during their war, which began in September 1980. [...] The committee accused Iraq of violating the Geneva Conventions by not repatriating most of the severely sick and wounded Iranian prisoners. The deportation to Iraq of "tens of thousands" of Iranian civilians, the Red Cross said, is another breach of the Conventions." (NYT, 12 May 1983)

In an analysis of the Iran-Iraq war from an international legal perspective of 1992, the research foundation T.M.C. Asser Instituut points out that Iranian authorities had accused Iraq of committing atrocities, especially mutilations and executions, against *pasdarans* (Islamic Revolutionary Guards) and *bassijis* (members of the Volunteer Mass Army):

„Though there is no agreement on the status of some people, considered as civilians by Iran, and as combatants by Iraq, the two countries seem to agree to recognize the *pasdaran*s (Islamic Revolutionary Guards) and the *bassijis* (members of the Volunteer Mass Army) as combatants and , therefore, to afford them prisoner of war status, when they are in the enemy's hands. Iran blames Iraq, not for having allotted to them that status, but for treating them as it does: Iran affirms that atrocities have been made committed against those two groups, especially mutilations and executions. The Iranian authorities complained to the mission sent by the Secretary-General particularly about the mass executions of prisoners belonging to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards, in compliance with orders from the Iraqi military authorities. Iraq denied the existence of such orders and such massacres, and the Secretary-General's mission was not able to confirm it.“ (T.M.C. Asser Instituut, 1992, p. 134)

In a compilation on the Iran-Iraq war of 1993, Farhang Rajaei, university professor at the Canadian Carleton university, lists a number of human rights violations and violations of humanitarian law, including maltreatment of POWs:

„Articles 55 and 56 of the Geneva Convention relate to the duty of the occupier state to provide food and medicine and to maintain medical centres and hospitals in the occupied territories. The government of Iraq not only brutally maltreated civilian persons; it also refused to provide basic requirements and medical and health services. As a result, many of the maltreated prisoners of war and civilian persons in the occupied territories died.“ (Rajaei, Farhang, 1993, p. 60)

„Political leaders and military commanders are responsible for acts committed by persons under their command. These acts include genocide and brutal treatment of prisoners of war. Existing documents and eyewitnesses recount massacres, maltreatment, displacement of civilian persons, plunder of public and private property in the occupied lands, and senseless destruction of cities, towns, and rural settlements by Iraq's armed forces.“ (Rajaei, Farhang, 1993, p. 63)

Two media reports could be found which indicate that biological weapons were tested on Iranian POWs during the 1980s:

In January 1998, an article released by Associated Press refers to a Sunday Times report according to which Iraq had tested anthrax on Iranian prisoners of war in the 1980s:

“Iranian prisoners of war died in agony when Iraq tested the deadly biological agent anthrax on them during the 1980s, The Sunday Times in London reported. According to the newspaper, U.N. weapons inspectors, Iraqi dissidents and Israeli intelligence said the tests began during Iraq's eight-year war with Iran. The Sunday Times quoted Israeli military intelligence sources as saying that on one occasion, 10 Iranian prisoners of war were taken to an area near Iraq's border with Saudi Arabia, where they were lashed to posts and "left helpless as an anthrax bomb was exploded by remote control 15 yards away." Phone calls by The Associated Press to the Iraqi Embassy in London were not answered Sunday. Iraq repeatedly has said it has not conducted chemical and biological weapons tests on humans. But it has acknowledged using animals in such tests before the

United Nations ordered the weapons destroyed as a condition for ending the 1991 Persian Gulf War." (Associated Press, 18 January 1998)

In January 2003, the Arabic News Website Al-Bawaba reports about the female scientist Dr. Rihab Taha, the head of Iraq's germ warfare programme. According to the article, Dr. Taha had tested biological weapons on Iranian prisoners of war:

"The first round of UN weapons inspectors to Iraq in the 1990s recovered video tapes of Taha's tests on animals but the images of dying creatures in glass boxes were so disgusting that they have never been released. However, there is evidence Dr. Germ tested her biological weapons on human beings as well. According to Western intelligence sources, Taha watched closely behind a thick glass screen as her lethal moulds, bacteria and viruses were tested on Iranian prisoners of war strapped to beds in an underground testing facility at Al Hakam. In yet another test, 12 Iranian prisoners were tied to posts at an open-air test site near Iraq's border with the Saudi Kingdom, as shells loaded with anthrax were blown up a few yards away. The prisoners were given helmets to protect them from shrapnel so the full effect of the bacteria could be properly monitored. Each died from the disease a few days later. Furthermore, the first UN inspectors suspect Dr. Germ deliberately exposed Iraqi prison populations to certain diseases to gauge their effect as weapons of war. Among the diseases the prisoners were reportedly exposed to were haemorrhagic conjunctivitis, which temporarily blinds the victim and makes their eyes bleed, Crimean Congo Fever, and Camel Pox, a disease that slowly kills the sufferer from blood loss through open skin lesions. These experiments may have never come to light if it were not for the defection of General Hussein Kamal, son-in-law of Saddam Hussein and a weapons of mass destruction expert. In 1995, Kamal defected from Iraq to Jordan where he told the world about Dr. Germ, thus making him the first to expose Taha's work and the killer diseases that Iraq holds in reserve." (Al-Bawaba, 14 January 2003)

In an article published shortly after the launch of the UNSC 1985 report, the New York Times (NYT) summarised the report as follows:

„A report by a three-member United Nations study group has concluded that both Iran and Iraq regularly mistreat each other's prisoners of war in violation of the Geneva Conventions. The report calls for both sides to release as many prisoners as possible. The 82-page report, made public today by Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, grew out of trips to P.O.W. camps in Iran and Iraq, which have been at war for four and a half years. It is estimated that there are 50,000 Iraqi P.O.W.'s in Iran and that more than 9,000 Iranians are being held in Iraq. The inquiry marks the first time that the United Nations has carried an on-site investigation of P.O.W. camps and made specific recommendations for improvements. Riot at Prison Camp The investigative team was set up by the Secretary General to look into events at the Gorgan prison camp in northern Iran after a riot broke out between two rival P.O.W. factions during a visit last October by the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Iranians subsequently accused the International Red Cross of spying and provoking the riot, and it halted all Red Cross activities in Iran. The International Red Cross is responsible for monitoring the condition of

P.O.W.'s under the Geneva Conventions. The members of the mission were Wolfram Karl of Austria, a law professor at the University of Salzburg; Torkel Opsahl of Norway, a law professor at the University of Oslo, and Maj. Gen. Rafael Angel Vale Huerta of Venezuela, a military adviser the Venezuelan Mission to the United Nations. The team visited eight prison camps in Iraq and eight in Iran over a two-week period. 'Stir Deep Emotions' The report reads at times like a personal letter, at times like a military inquiry. "The sight of so many thousands of men in P.O.W. camps," it says, mostly in the prime of their life, wasting their best years away in confinement, deprived of virtually all the amenities of life, uncertain of their fate, could not but stir deep emotions in every one of us." "The most vivid images that we have carried back from the P.O.W. camps," it says, "are fear, loneliness, uncertainty, isolation, bitterness and despair." It concludes that in neither country are prisoners "treated as badly as alleged by the Government of the other country" Nor are they treated as well, it adds, "as claimed by the Government of the detaining power." The group found that the Gorgan incident, in which 9 prisoners were killed and 47 were wounded, "has not been unique, or, indeed, the most violent" in prison camps in Iran and Iraq. The report suggests that political indoctrination is worse in Iran, while physical brutality is worse in Iraq. Harsh Treatment Found Common The team also found that "harsh treatment and violence in the camps were far from uncommon," including whippings, beatings with riot sticks, electric shocks and assaults on sexual organs. The team also received reports of collective punishment, such as lengthy confinement and deprivation of food and water, and it heard allegations of religious pressure on non-Moslem prisoners and attempts to convert them to Islam. In one camp, the team said it saw a group of more than 190 non-Iraqi detainees from 17 countries. They apparently included both volunteers in the Iraqi Army and civilians who said they were oil workers or fishermen. Among them were Egyptian, Lebanese, Somali and Sudanese nationals, and smaller numbers of nationals from Algeria, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. Hundreds Weren't Seen The report concludes that the Iraqis have concealed hundreds of detainees. On the Iranian side, the team was able to visit only 8 of 16 prison camps. According to the International Red Cross, only 35,000 of the some 50,000 Iraqi prisoners held in Iran have been formally registered. These were among the other findings: - Reports "by P.O.W.'s everywhere" that the general conditions of the camps had noticeably improved shortly before the team arrived. - "Enforced physical and intellectual idleness" of many prisoners that contributed to progressive mental degeneration. - Inadequate evidence by which to draw conclusions about allegations of mass killings of prisoners and other enemy personnel. The report, which drew many of the same conclusions as early reports by the International Red Cross, says it would be in the interests of both nations to release "as many prisoners of war as possible." Among its other recommendations are the substantial improvement of the treatment of P.O.W.'s and the strict safeguarding of their rights under the Geneva Conventions; the prohibition of any form of physical mistreatment; the respect of freedom of thought and religion; the separation of prisoners belonging to different political factions, and the creation of conditions to allow the International Red Cross to carry out its functions. The report also calls on both Governments to refrain from using prisoners for purposes of political propaganda." (NYT, 22 February 1985)

The following US and British media reports were published in January 1991 during the second Gulf War (with both countries being part of the allied forces against Iraq in Operation Desert Shield/Storm) and mostly refer to the 1985 UN report, and to a smaller extent to statements by the ICRC and former PoWs:

A synopsis of the 1985 UN report can be found in an article published by the Los Angeles Times in January 1991:

„A special report of the United Nations secretary general during the height of the Iran-Iraq War in 1985 concluded that physical brutality was common in Iraqi prisoner of war camps. Some prisoners complained to U.N. investigators that they were beaten by batons, truncheons and wire cables. Others told of being suspended upside down from ceilings and being whipped in special interrogation centers. And some reported attempts to force them to give interviews critical of Iran and its leaders on radio and television. In several of the camps, the secretary general's mission was told that loudspeakers were installed in dormitories so propaganda could be played day and night. "During our visits to the POW camps in Iraq, we saw and heard much evidence of physical violence and ill treatment in the camps, attributed mainly to prison guards but also on occasions to those POWs who enjoyed the confidence of the authorities," the three-member commission appointed by Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar said. "Shortness of time did not allow us to examine and verify the truth of all such allegations, though their frequency and similarity leads us to the conclusion that brutality by guards in most POW camps is common." It is not clear that such treatment is in store for allied pilots captured in the Persian Gulf War. A senior U.N. official said that in one aspect the parading of recently taken prisoners on Baghdad television should be regarded as a plus because their names have been made known to the world and the International Red Cross can begin to follow their cases almost immediately. But some prisoners captured by Iraq might not receive such publicity and could get far worse treatment, particularly if they were secretly confined and interrogated, the official said. At the United Nations on Monday, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross said his organization was seeking to get in touch with prisoners taken by Iraq. The committee is charged with the responsibility of supervising the Geneva Convention covering the treatment of war prisoners. The Red Cross has eight employees in Baghdad, and they were instructed to make contact with Saddam Hussein's government. The 1985 report presented to the Security Council said that Iranian prisoners who spent time in Iraqi interrogation centers stated that torture was frequently used for punishment, to extract information or simply to intimidate. The report said the allegations most frequently heard related to blows on the head. "In almost all of the camps visited, we met POWs who had had their hearing impaired, including several who had lost their hearing in one ear or even some who had become totally deaf, as a result of blows on their head or ears," the commission said. "We were also told that some POWs had lost their sight or had had it seriously impaired as a result of beatings. We noticed scars, bruises, broken teeth and other bodily marks which appeared to be consistent with the stories told to us by the prisoners. "Other frequent forms of punishment mentioned to us included confinement in punishment cells for periods up to a month, and individual and collective deprivation of food." Some of the prisoners in the

eight camps in Iraq visited by the U.N. fact finders in January, 1985, complained they were beaten or punished for talking to the Red Cross. Prisoners told U.N. investigators of being suspended upside down from ceilings or ventilators, of having the soles of their feet whipped or beaten, of electric shocks administered to various parts of their bodies, of being burned by cigarettes. They said the guards sometimes staged mock executions. "We met several POWs who alleged that they had become impotent as a result of torture and heard allegations about cases of castrations," the investigators said. ". . . We were also told of instances of sexual assaults. ". . . Even taking into account the possibility of exaggeration, we were struck by the consistent pattern of many of the allegations," they said. Perez de Cuellar commissioned the report after charges by Iran and Iraq of mistreatment of prisoners in camps set up in both nations. The report also said Iranian prison guards mistreated Iraqi captives. It said that most of the problems confronted by prisoners in both countries were identical -- difficult living conditions, frequently harsh treatment by some camp guards and uncertainty about the length of captivity. But the U.N. fact finders said incidents marked by violence were greater in Iraq. "Physical violence appeared to be particularly common in POW camps in Iraq," the investigators concluded. In several of the camps in Iraq, the U.N. team said it heard allegations of attempts to influence POWs politically and ideologically. Prisoners complained of being forced to listen to propaganda morning and night over loudspeakers installed in every dormitory. "Other POWs told us of attempts to force them to give interviews critical of the Iranian leaders on radio or television," the report said. Many prisoners complained about inadequate medical care and about meals being withheld as group punishment." (Los Angeles Times, 22 January 1991)

Also published in January 1991, this article by the British Independent deals with findings by the ICRC "early in the Iran-Iraq war" and by the 1985 UNSC mission on inhumane and degrading treatment, torture and killings of POWs:

„IRAQ'S mistreatment of allied prisoners of war has angered but not surprised diplomats, military attaches and human rights experts hired by the United Nations to investigate allegations that many prisoners were executed upon capture in the Iran-Iraq war or were severely tortured under interrogation. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) concluded early in the Iran-Iraq war that both countries had "summarily executed" captured soldiers. "These executions were sometimes acts of individuals involving a few soldiers fallen into enemy hands; they have sometimes been systematic actions against entire enemy units, on orders to give no quarter." More chilling were the ICRC's conclusions that "wounded enemy have been slain or simply abandoned in the field of battle" to die. The investigators found the low number of enemy wounded on both sides was "disproportionate to the number of registered able-bodied prisoners in the camps or to even the most conservative estimates of the extent of the losses suffered by both parties". Both countries routinely violated the most basic norms for the treatment of captured enemy soldiers throughout the war, but in interview the investigators agreed that Iraq's behaviour was worse. There was often a six-week period after capture before prisoners were registered with the Red Cross, and it was at that time the worst interrogations took place. Sometimes prisoners were not registered for years, in an effort to punish and cause political unrest in Iran, the investigators said. UN investigators found

that Iraq routinely tortured Iranian prisoners to extract information. The prisoners testified they were hung upside down, beaten and burned, given electrical shocks, threatened with death and had objects forcefully inserted into their rectums. The recent images of captured allied airmen denouncing the war effort on Iraqi television were to some extent a replay of what occurred on a massive scale during the Iran-Iraq war, when PoWs were forced to denounce their leaders on radio and television. "Physical violence appeared to be particularly common in PoW camps in Iraq," a UN mission consisting of two European law professors, a Venezuelan general and two senior UN officials reported to the Security Council in 1985. Their report concluded that "punishment both of a corporal character and in the form of isolation and confinement in 'punishment rooms', and deprivation of food and facilities take place". This maltreatment took place under questioning in special interrogation rooms, and this may account for the condition of the prisoners shown on Iraqi television. It was in these centres, UN investigators learned, that prisoners were hung upside down, beaten, shocked with electricity, burned and threatened. "We met several PoW's who alleged that they had become impotent as a result of torture and heard allegations about cases of castrations and of PoW's having bottles or other objects inserted into their rectum. We were told instances of sexual assaults', the UN investigators said. "The allegations most frequently heard related to blows on the head and other beatings with batons, truncheons or wire cables." "The prisoners were also subjected to psychological torture which consisted of being forced to listen to political broadcasts over Radio Baghdad on loudspeakers installed in every dormitory. Other PoWs told us of attempts to force them to give interviews . . . on radio and television.'" (The Independent, 23 January 1991)

An article by the Herald Sun of January 1991 briefly deals with torture methods employed during the Iran-Iraq war against Iranian POWs:

„ALLIED prisoners-of-war in Iraq are facing the same terror inflicted on Iranian PoWs during the Iraq-Iran eight-year war, a human rights expert said yesterday. Torture methods include electric shocks, denial of sleep and food, concerted beatings and having their heads held under water.“ (Herald Sun, 24 January 1991)

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