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## Report by the ICRC on the coalition forces' treatment of persons held in Iraq

Geneva (ICRC) – The Wall Street Journal of 7 May has published extensive excerpts from a confidential document entitled "Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the Treatment by the Coalition Forces of Prisoners of War and Other Protected Persons by the Geneva Conventions in Iraq During Arrest, Internment and Interrogation" of January 2004.

"I am profoundly disturbed that the report was made available for publication without the consent of the ICRC," declared ICRC president Jakob Kellenberger. "The ICRC fulfils its mandate to protect persons detained in armed conflict by addressing problems and violations through private approaches to the detaining authorities and their superiors. This long-standing practice allows us to act in a decisive manner, while ensuring that our delegates have continued access to detainees around the world."

The ICRC has visited persons held by the coalition forces and submitted its confidential reports to the authorities responsible on the basis of its mandate under the Geneva Conventions.

This report summarizes a series of working papers handed over to coalition forces. ICRC delegates' findings were based on their observations and on private interviews with prisoners of war and civilian internees during the 29 visits the ICRC conducted in 14 places of detention throughout Iraq between 31 March and 24 October 2003.

In addition, ICRC delegates and officials met representatives of the coalition authorities to present them with serious concerns regarding the treatment of persons protected by the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions whom the coalition forces were holding in Iraq.

In all of its oral and written approaches, the ICRC recalled the laws and norms that States commit themselves to obeying when they adhere to the Geneva Conventions and other international treaties.

The ICRC's findings prompted it to make repeated requests to the coalition authorities that they take corrective action.

"These findings clearly underline the necessity for the authorities concerned to strike a balance between the legitimate security concerns of States and the protection of human dignity. This lies at the heart of international humanitarian law, which must be preserved, upheld and promoted at all times," said Jakob Kellenberger. "The ICRC reiterates its firm intention of continuing to help all persons protected by international humanitarian law in all areas of armed conflict, remaining true to its established principles and practice."

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