

Beat: Politics

UN counts 52 corpses after massacre at Iranian dissident camp in Iraq

-, 04.09.2013, 23:00 Time

USPA News - A United Nations (UN) delegations said Tuesday it counted 52 bodies in a makeshift morgue at an Iranian dissident camp in northeastern Iraq, the first confirmed death toll after Sunday's massacre at the camp, but it remains unknown who was responsible. The attack took place on Sunday at Camp New Iraq, better known by its former name Camp Ashraf, in the eastern province of Diyala, approximately 60 miles (95 kilometers) northeast of Baghdad.

It is home to hundreds of members, relatives, and sympathizers of Iran's main opposition group, the People's Mojahedeen of Iran. There had been conflicting reports about the number of casualties since the incident, but a UN delegation that visited the camp on Monday counted 52 bodies in a makeshift morgue. All the deceased appeared to have suffered gunshot wounds, the majority of them in the head and the upper body, and several had their hands tied. The delegation, which met separately with the camp's surviving residents and the commander of Diyala's police force, also reported seeing several damaged buildings, including one that was burnt, and was shown quantities of explosives. They were told by the camp's residents that seven people were still missing. It remains unclear who was responsible for Sunday's massacre, although the dissident People's Mojahedeen of Iran group has accused Iraqi security forces of being behind the bloodshed. This claim has been rejected by the Iraqi government, with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki ordering an investigation to determine the exact circumstances. "I call on the Iraqi government to ensure that a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation into this atrocious crime is conducted without delay and that the results of the investigation are made public," said Gyorgy Busztin, who is the UN's Deputy Special Representative for Iraq. During Monday's visit, the camp's residents agreed to allow Iraqi ambulances to transport the bodies of the deceased to a morgue in Baquba, the capital of Diyala province. A number of UN officials, including the head of the Human Rights and Medical Sections of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), remained at the camp on Tuesday for further monitoring. The Iraqi government has repeatedly stated for years that it wants to close down Camp Ashraf, and more than 3,000 residents were previously moved to a transit facility known as Camp Liberty while the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) carries out a process to determine their refugee status and to resettle them in another country willing to accept them.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1420/un-counts-52-corpses-after-massacre-at-iranian-dissident-camp-in-iraq.html>

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619