

For immediate release

10/11/2005

HADITHA HOSPITAL TAKEN OVER BY US/ IRAQI MILITARY FORCES

On October 4th 2005, the US and Iraqi military launched an attack on Haditha city, western Iraq, 350 kilometres from Baghdad. US and Iraqi soldiers set up checkpoints inside and outside the city with an estimated population of 100,000. The city is on the bank of the Euphrates and has been subjected to several large-scale military attacks in the last four months.

The medical facilities inside the city have been devastated by these ongoing attacks. The main hospital has been severely damaged by a previous military attack in May that resulted in the medical store of the hospital being burnt and completely destroyed along with the laundry and ward departments of the hospital.

On October 4th soldiers declared a curfew in the city and entered the hospital and occupied the hospital building. US/ Iraqi forces took over the hospital for seven days arresting the manager of the hospital and another doctor. Medical staffs report that tanks were used in the military operation to occupy the hospital.

Doctors for Iraq has been told that the military interfered with medical personal and used violence against doctors during an interrogation, which took place outside of the hospital. The medical personnel involved say that the military accused them of treating insurgents.

Occupying a hospital and interfering with a civilian medical facility put the safety of health workers and patients in jeopardy. Using the hospital as a military base for seven days compromised the neutrality of the hospital making it more vulnerable to attack from both parties to the conflict.

These actions severely contravene medical neutrality outlined in article 3 and 4 of the Geneva Convention concerning the protection and prohibition of the misuse of health personnel, aid workers, medical units, convoys and logistics (ambulances, vehicles etc.) in the areas of conflict.

Doctors for Iraq is calling for an urgent investigation into the events of October 4th 2005 and the wider issues around breaches of medial neutrality and the continued violations of the Geneva Convention by such actions and military operations.

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