

Beat: Miscellaneous

ISIS executed around 600 inmates at Iraqi prison, survivors say

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USPA News - Islamic State fighters executed around 600 Shia Muslims when they seized a prison in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul in June, survivors have told Human Rights Watch (HRW), making it one of the worst atrocities yet in the ongoing conflict, according to a report published on Thursday. The mass murder occurred on June 10 when Islamic State fighters seized Badoush Prison near Mosul.

The gunmen separated Sunni and Shia inmates before forcing the Shia men to kneel along the edge of a nearby ravine and shooting them with assault rifles and automatic weapons. A number of Kurdish and Yezidi inmates were also killed, witnesses said. Human Rights Watch, which spoke with 15 Shia prisoners who survived the massacre, said the mass murder may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. "The gruesome details of ISIS' mass murder of prison inmates make it impossible to deny the depravity of this extremist group," said Letta Tayler, senior terrorism and counterterrorism researcher at Human Rights Watch. "People of every ethnicity and creed should condemn these horrific tactics, and press Iraqi and international authorities to bring those responsible to justice." According to the witnesses, Islamic State fighters broke into Badoush Prison the day they captured Mosul and herded up to 1,500 inmates onto trucks to take them to an isolated stretch of desert about 2 kilometers (1.2 mile) away. Shia prisoners were then robbed before being marched to the edge of a ravine, where they were killed. "They were shouting, 'This is how we serve justice!' and, 'This one's alive, shoot him again!'", one of the witnesses, who was only identified as F.S. to protect his identity, was quoted as saying. Most of those shot fell into the ravine but an estimated 30 to 40 prisoners survived, mostly by rolling into the ravine and pretending to be dead, or because they were shielded by the bodies of other prisoners who fell on top of them. The witnesses said several people who were wounded later died of their injuries while trying to get away, Human Rights Watch said. After the massacre, the gunmen set fire to brush in and around the ravine before leaving. Prisoners who had claimed to be Sunni or Christian were taken on a four-hour ride to an unknown desert location, where Islamic State fighters removed between 50 and 100 men from the group on grounds that they were Shia Muslims posing as Sunni. Their fate remains unknown. The other inmates were driven back to Mosul three days later and were set free, one of the witnesses told HRW. The Islamic State (IS), which was previously known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS), is an al-Qaeda splinter group which declared itself an Islamic caliphate earlier this year after seizing much of northeastern Syria and making huge gains in parts of Iraq. Their rule has been marked by brutal violence - such as beheadings and crucifixions - of anyone opposing the "caliphate." Since early August, U.S. forces have carried out hundreds of airstrikes in Iraq to protect U.S. interests and to assist Iraqi forces as they attempt to fight off ISIS. A coalition of countries - including France, the United Kingdom, and Australia - have since joined that effort. The United States - along with several Arab countries - have also launched a separate air campaign against ISIS in northern Syria.

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