

Defence chiefs and ministers face fresh pressure over the treatment of civilians at the hands of British forces in Iraq today, as a new report revives fears that "torture" techniques have been used 30 years after they were banned.

A scathing report from the Joint Human Rights Committee (JHRC) warns that the use of "coercive interrogation techniques" may have been officially sanctioned, despite assurances that troops knew they were outlawed.

The JHRC report also found that the use of hooding and stress positioning by 1 Queen's Lancashire Regiment in 2003 was based on legal advice received from brigade headquarters. It claims that, at least until the Baha Mousa case came to light, the prohibition on the use of conditioning techniques "was not as clearly articulated to troops in Iraq as it might, and indeed should, have been".

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