

IRAQ Hamza Qassim Sabbat (m), also known as Abu Haitham, aged 46
Ibrahim 'Abd al-Jasim Mohammad (m), also known as Abu Ayub, aged 43

According to press reports, the two men named above appeared on Iraqi national television yesterday and confessed their involvement in "terrorist acts" inside Iraq for the benefit of a foreign country. Amnesty International is concerned that their confessions may have been extracted under torture and that televised statements may have an impact upon the fairness of their trial. The two men are also at risk of being sentenced to death and executed.

During their confessions, Hamza Qassim Sabbat and Ibrahim 'Abd al-Jasim Mohammad reportedly admitted that they were members of groups that had been trained in Iran and sent to Iraq to kill Iraqi officials, members of the security forces and the military, as well as carry out bomb attacks in the capital, Baghdad. The two also reportedly confessed their involvement in rocket missile attacks targeting government buildings in Baghdad in 2000 and 2001, as well as in a "plan to destabilise the country" in the aftermath of the attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001.

Televised confessions are contrary to fundamental principles of international law, including Iraq's obligation as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 14 (2), which states that: "Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall have the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Televised statements by individuals or groups of individuals have been used by the Iraqi authorities on several occasions in the past, either to "confess" to involvement in spying activities for a foreign country, "terrorist acts", killing of prominent figures, or to denounce relatives who had fled the country and joined opposition groups abroad.

On 17 March 1999, four people, Shaikh 'Abd al-Hassan 'Abbas al-Kufi, Shaikh 'Ali Kadhim Hajman, Ahmad Mustafa Hassan al-Ardbili and Haidar 'Ali Hussain, appeared on Iraqi television and confessed to the killing of a well known Shi'a Muslim cleric, Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr, and two of his sons in February 1999. In April 1999 the Iraqi authorities announced that the four had been executed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Arabic or your own language:

- recognizing the rights and responsibilities of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but expressing concern that televised confessions contravene international law and may have been extracted under torture;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that Hamza Qassim Sabbat and Ibrahim 'Abd al-Jasim Mohammad are being treated humanely and are given access to lawyers of their own choosing, relatives and medical help as necessary;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that the two are tried in accordance with international standards for fair trial;
- urging that Hamza Qassim Sabbat and Ibrahim 'Abd al-Jasim Mohammad are not sentenced to death.

APPEALS TO:

President Saddam Hussain
President of the Republic
Presidential Palace
Karadat Mariam
Baghdad, Iraq

Telegrams: President Hussain, Baghdad, Iraq

Telexes: 212299 alqasr ik

Salutation: Your Excellency

Naji Sabri
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Baghdad, Iraq

Telegrams: Foreign Affairs Minister Sabri, Baghdad, Iraq

Salutation: Your Excellency

Mahmoud Dhiyab al-Ahmad
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
Baghdad, Iraq

Telegrams: Interior Minister al-Ahmad, Baghdad, Iraq

Salutation: Your Excellency

Mundhir Ibrahim al-Shawi
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Baghdad, Iraq

Telegrams: Justice Minister al-Shawi, Baghdad, Iraq

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Iraq accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 September 2002.