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LIBYA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS THE LATEST EXECUTIONS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.

Amnesty International strongly condemns the execution yesterday of eight men in Libya. The eight people, six senior army officers and two civilians, were executed in the morning of 2 January 1997.

“These executions are an outrage” Amnesty International said today. “From the moment of their arrest more than three years ago their case has been shrouded in secrecy. They have been held in unknown locations all that time, completely cut off from their families and the outside world, and every trial hearing has been held in camera.”

The six army officers were identified as Colonel Miftah Qarrum al-Wirfalli, Colonel Mostafa Abu al-Qassim Mas‘ud al-Kikli, Lieutenant-Colonel Sa‘ad Saleh Farag, Major Khalil Salam Mohammad al-Jidiq, Major Mostafa Ihbayl al-Firjani and Major Ramadhan al-‘Ayhuri. The two civilians were Dr Sa‘ad Misbah al-‘Amin al-Zubaydi and Sulayman Ghayth Miftah.

The men were reportedly charged with “passing defence secrets to foreign states [the United States of America]” and membership of “a banned organization linked to agents of foreign governments”. This organization is the National Front for the Salvation of Libya -NFSL, the main Libyan opposition group operating in exile.

The Court acquitted six other army officers, including Lieutenant-Colonel Mohammad al-Ghul and Flight-Captain Sadeq Shaqluf, and two civilians.

The people involved in this case were among dozens arrested and detained in the aftermath of a rebellion by army units around the city of Misrata in October 1993. Three of those executed gave televised “confessions”, reportedly as a result of torture, to being American “spies” in early March 1994. They said they had been recruited as American Intelligence agents by members of the NFSL. Trial before the lower military court reportedly took place at the end of 1995. Amnesty International has also received reports that the Supreme Military Court’s verdict was given and video-taped about a month ago, but was not made public until 1 January 1997 when the Libyan television announced the news of the death sentences. Espionage is punishable by death in Libya and so is mere membership of an opposition group.

“The blanket of secrecy heightens our fears that the basic human rights of these individuals were disregarded from the outset” Amnesty International said. The organization had repeatedly requested information about their legal status and whereabouts and sent urgent appeals after reports were received that they had been tortured, and then sentenced to death. To date no response has been received from the Libyan authorities.  
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