

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 14/03/00

EXTRA 20/00

Fear of i.

**IRAQ/IRAQI KURDISTAN 'Ammar Sharif
Yusuf Mohammad
Fahd Nassir**

Amnesty International is concerned that the three above-named Iraqi opposition party members arrested in Iraqi Kurdistan on 16 February 2000 are at risk of ill-treatment in detention and of being forcibly returned to areas under the control of the Iraqi Government where they could face arrest and serious human rights violations.

'Ammar Sharif, Yusuf Mohammad and Fahd Nassir, all considered by Amnesty International to be prisoners of conscience, were arrested by the security forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in Sulaimaniya and are now detained at Sulaimaniya Central Prison.

The three, all members of the Central Committee of the Iraqi Workers' Communist Party (IWCP), fled to Iraqi Kurdistan in the last few years to avoid arrest for anti-government political activities. Since being there they have been involved in setting up a non-governmental organization aimed at providing help for Iraqis forced to flee areas controlled by the Iraqi Government. They have reportedly been arrested for publicly accusing the PUK of rigging recent local elections and criticising the security measures taken by the PUK during the elections.

On 22 February Amnesty International wrote to the PUK and sought clarification of the reasons for their arrest and detention. In their replies, dated 24 February and 2 March 2000, the PUK authorities said they had been arrested for "creating disturbances and encouraging others to take part in disturbances, and illegally collecting money and forming committees and organizations to collect money without proper procedures and permission". They also said the men had now been released, contrary to reports received by Amnesty International.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the end of the Gulf War in 1991 Iraqi Kurdistan has remained under the control of the two main Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). On 3 February local elections were held in the area controlled by the PUK in which representatives from the PUK, Islamist parties, IWCP and other parties took part.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Arabic or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of 'Ammar Sharif, Yusuf Mohammad and Fahd Nassir who were arrested by the PUK on 16 February 2000 and who are now being held at Sulaimaniya Central Prison;
- seeking assurances that they are being treated humanely and have regular access to lawyers of their own choosing, their families and any medical care they may require;
- urging that they be immediately released as prisoners of conscience arrested solely for their peaceable activities;
- seeking assurances that they will not be forcibly returned to areas under Iraqi Government-control.

APPEALS TO:

Jalal Talabani
President
Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)
Sulaimaniya
Kurdistan
Iraq

Telegrams: President, Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Kurdistan, Iraq
Salutation: Dear Mr Talabani

Jalal Talabani
c/o PUK United Kingdom
First Floor, 5 Glasshouse Walk,
Vauxhall
London SE11 5ES
UK

Faxes: + 44 171 8400630
Salutation: Dear Mr Talabani

Jalal Talabani
c/o PUK USA
444N. Capitol Street, NW, Suite 837
Washington D. C.
USA

Faxes: + 1 202 6372723
Salutation: Dear Mr Talabani

COPIES TO: Office of the PUK, if there is one in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 April 2000.