

AI Index: PRE 01/534/2013  
10 October 2013

## **Iraq: Dozens executed in two days amid increased violence**

The Iraqi authorities must immediately halt all executions, Amnesty International said after 42 people were executed in the last two days.

“The escalation in the number of executions in recent days is an extremely alarming development,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Middle East and North Africa Deputy Director at Amnesty International.

”Death sentences continue to be imposed after grossly unfair trials. ‘Confessions’ obtained under torture on which convictions are based make it very likely that innocent people have been put to death in Iraq.”

According to a statement by the Ministry of Justice, the 41 men and one woman executed were all convicted under the country’s draconian Anti Terrorism Law, adopted in 2005.

Hundreds of civilians continue to be killed every month in violent attacks by armed groups. School children and Shi’a pilgrims were targeted in the latest wave of bombing attacks.

“Deliberately killing civilians can never be justified. The Iraqi authorities must protect civilians from violence by armed groups and bring perpetrators to justice. Those found responsible, after a fair judicial process, should be punished, but without recourse to the death penalty,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

“There would be more justice in Iraq if the authorities addressed the flaws in their justice system, investigated claims of torture and other ill-treatment in custody, and, where applicable, granted re-trials in full compliance with fair trial standards. They must also declare a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolishing the death penalty in the country and commute all existing death sentences,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

At least 125 people were executed in Iraq so far this year. It is one of the most prolific executioners worldwide, after China and Iran.

“Executing 42 individuals in the same week as the World Day Against the Death Penalty shows the determination of the authorities to rely on the death penalty, in total disregard of international criticism,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

There is simply no convincing evidence that the death penalty acts as a special deterrent. Instead the Iraqi authorities should focus on effective solutions to address the violence in the country.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, without exception.