

PUBLIC

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UA 66/07 Incommunicado detention/fear of torture or ill-treatment

IRAQ Mohammed Siyassi Ashkani (m), journalist, aged about 35

Mohammed Siyassi Ashkani has been held incommunicado for almost two months by Kurdish security forces in northern Iraq. The reasons for his detention are not known. He is at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Mohammed Siyassi Ashkani is a Kurdish journalist working for the newspaper *Peka* in the town of Rania, in the Kurdish-controlled province of Sulaimaniya in northern Iraq. Around 22 January 2007, he was reportedly arrested at his home by members of the *Asayish*, official security forces operating in the Kurdish region, and transferred to an unknown location in the city of Sulaimaniya. The reasons for his arrest are not known and his family have been unable to obtain any information about him.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since 1991, some areas of northern Iraq have been controlled by the two leading Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). These Kurdish-controlled areas enjoyed substantial autonomy even while Saddam Hussein was in power, and have continued to do so after the elections in Iraq in December 2005. In May 2006, a new unified regional government, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), was announced. The KDP leader, Mas'ud Barzani, was selected by the Kurdish Assembly as President of the Kurdistan Region while the PUK Secretary General Jalal Talabani was selected by the Iraqi National Assembly as President of Iraq.

Amnesty International's main concerns in the Kurdish areas of Iraq include arbitrary arrests, detention without charge or trial, the use of excessive force against demonstrators, curbs on freedom of expression and a continuing pattern of "honour killings". In September 2006 the Kurdish authorities executed 11 men in the city of Arbil. They were said to be members of the illegal armed group *Ansar al-Islam*. These executions were the first to be carried out in the Kurdish region since 1992.

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

- expressing concern that Mohammed Siyassi Ashkani is being held incommunicado in the city of Sulaimaniya;
- calling for assurances that he is being treated humanely in detention, and not tortured or ill-treated;
- seeking clarification of the reasons for his arrest, legal status and requesting information about his whereabouts;
- requesting that he be given access to his family, lawyers of his own choosing and any necessary medical care;
- calling for his immediate release unless he is to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

Please send appeals via your nearest Kurdish Regional Government office abroad, asking for them to be forwarded to:

President: Mas'ud Barzani

Salutation: Your Excellency

Prime Minister: Nechirvan Barzani

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice: Farouq Jamil Sadiq
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Human Rights: Yousif Mohammad Aziz
Salutation: Your Excellency

Kurdish regional Government offices
The Kurdistan Regional Government in Arbil, Iraq
Fax: +1 651 846 6051
Email: erbil@rp.krg.org

KRG Representation in CIS countries
Moscow, Russian Federation
Fax: +7 095 248 4450
Email: rus@rp.krg.org

KRG Representation in Austria
Vertretung der Regionalregierung Kurdistan-Irak in Österreich
P.O. Box 49, A-1011 Vienna, Austria
Fax: +43 1 544 0305
Email: austria@rp.krg.org

KRG Mission to the European Union
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Email: eu@rp.krg.org

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Fax: +49 30 7974 8492
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Fax: +1 703 442 5316

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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 26 April 2007.