

PUBLIC

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Fear of further killings/ fear of torture or

ill-treatment

23 Februa

**IRAQ Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr, 56 (killed)**

**Two of his sons: Hojjatu al-Islam al-Sayyid Mostafa al-Sadr, 34, and al-Sayyid Mu'ammal al-Sadr (both killed)**

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A prominent Shi'a Muslim cleric was shot dead, along with two of his sons, on the night of 18 February 1999. Many people were reportedly killed by the security forces and hundreds arrested at the protests that followed. Amnesty International is concerned that other Shi'a Muslim clerics may be at risk of assassination, and those arrested after the killings may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr and two of his sons were shot dead in the southern city of al-Najaf. Their bodies were reportedly buried the next day and their relatives denied a funeral ceremony. Widespread protests erupted at the news of the killings, particularly in the Shi'a Muslim dominated district of al-Thawra in Baghdad and in the southern cities of Karbala', al-Nassiriya, al-Hilla and al-Najaf. Security forces reportedly opened fire killing dozens of protesters. Several hundred others were said to have been arrested and may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The murder of Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr and his two sons follows the killings of two other well known Shi'a Muslim clerics. In April 1998 Ayatollah al-Shaikh Mortadha al-Borujerdi, aged 67, was shot dead in al-Najaf and in June 1998 Grand Ayatollah al-Shaikh Mirza 'Ali al-Gharawi, aged 68, his son-in-law and two other people were shot dead when the car in which they were travelling was stopped between Karbala' and al-Najaf. In November 1998 the Iraqi authorities reportedly announced that eight people had been arrested in connection with the killings of the two Shi'a Muslim clerics and that robbery was the reason for the killings. In January 1999 another Shi'a Muslim cleric, Grand Ayatollah al-Shaikh Bashir al-Najafi, reportedly escaped an assassination attempt in al-Najaf.

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

- urging that an immediate, thorough and independent investigation into the circumstances of the death of Ayatollah Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr and his two sons, as well as the reported deaths of dozens of protesters, be carried out and its findings made public;
- seeking assurances that all those arrested be treated humanely and given access to lawyers and independent medical help if necessary.

#### **APPEALS TO:**

H.E. 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**

H.E. Muhammad Zammam 'Abd al-Razzaq  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
Baghdad, Iraq

**Telegrams: Interior Minister al-Razzaq, Baghdad, Iraq**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

H.E. Shabib Lazem al-Maliki  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Baghdad, Iraq

**Telegrams: Justice Minister al-Maliki, Baghdad, Iraq**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Due to a limited and irregular postal service to Iraq, if possible please send telegrams and telexes. Alternatively you may write directly to Iraq's diplomatic representative in your country.

**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 6 April 1999.