

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WEB FEATURE

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### **Unjust and unfair: The death penalty in Iraq**

Under the government of Saddam Hussein, the death penalty was applicable for a wide range of offences and was used extensively.

Following the US-led invasion of Iraq, the death penalty was suspended in June 2003, but was reinstated by the Iraqi Interim Government in August 2004. The return to the death penalty was opposed by the European Union, the United Nations and international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International.

Since then, more than 270 people have been sentenced to death and at least 100 people have been reported executed.

During 2004, no executions were reported; at least three men were executed in 2005. There was a rapid rise in executions in 2006 with at least 65 people, including at least two women, reported to have been executed by hanging. This figures place Iraq now among the countries with the highest numbers of executions reported in 2006. Higher totals were recorded only in China, Iran and Pakistan.

Amnesty International (AI) opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception as a violation of the right to life and as the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment.

In a new report, entitled Unjust and unfair: The death penalty in Iraq, AI is calling on the Iraqi government to:

- establish an immediate moratorium on executions
- commute all pending death sentences;
- move towards the abolition of the death penalty and to respect international standards restricting the scope of the death penalty pending abolition;
- ensure the most rigorous standards for fair trial are respected in all cases

#### **For further information, please see:**

Iraq: Televised 'confessions', torture and unfair trials underpin world's fourth highest executioner (Press Release, 20 April 2007) -

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE140202007>

The report's main findings include:

- Insufficient or no investigation of allegations of torture despite frequent reliance on "confessions" made during detention to obtain convictions for capital offences;
- Pre-trial televised "confessions" and the inclusion in court of evidence identifying the accused from witnesses who have previously seen the confession;
- Inadequate access to defence lawyers and the intimidation of lawyers including death threats and attacks.

Read the full report - <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE140142007>

Image caption: Hanging rope at execution gallows, Baghdad, Iraq