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Iraqi Interior Minister condemned for demanding execution of al-Qai'da suspects

Amnesty International today strongly condemned a call by the Iraqi Interior Minister for the swift execution of 39 alleged al-Qai'da members as they were paraded before journalists, handcuffed and clad in orange jumpsuits.

“For Jawad al-Bolani to abuse his position as Interior minister by parading these men publicly and calling for their execution before they have even gone to trial, flagrantly flaunting the requirement for defendants to be presumed innocent until proven guilty by a court, is absolutely outrageous,” said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International’s director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“It makes a complete mockery of any suggestion that these suspects will receive a fair trial, and sets a most ominous precedent for others.”

Jawad al-Bolani said at a press conference in Baghdad on 2 December:

"Today, we will send those criminals and the investigation results to the courts that will sentence them to death. Our demand is not to delay the carrying out of the executions against these criminals so that to deter terrorist and criminal elements."

According to media reports he also said that most of the 39 suspects had rejoined al-Qai'da linked groups after being released from Iraqi prisons administered by the USA. One of them was identified as Hazim al-Zawi, al-Qai'da in Iraq's third-highest leader.

Amnesty International highlighted serious concerns about human rights abuses suffered by the many thousands of detainees in Iraq, many of whom were transferred from US to Iraqi custody in the months up to mid-July 2010, in its report *NEW ORDER, SAME ABUSES: Unlawful detentions and torture in Iraq*, published in September.

The report detailed how many detainees were arbitrarily held, sometimes for several years without charge or trial, and often tortured to obtain forced confessions.

“We have been saying for a long time that ‘confessions’ in Iraq are regularly extracted under torture, so any ‘confessions’ these 39 suspects have made, which may be used in their trial, must be thoroughly investigated to ensure that they have not been made under duress, torture or other ill-treatment,” said Malcolm Smart.

“What chance can there be for any defendant to receive a fair trial if so senior a government minister shows such contempt for the rule of law?”

Background

Amnesty International calls on the Iraqi government to ensure that these and other detainees awaiting trial must receive fair trials that conform to recognized international standards.

The organisation recognises that the security situation in Iraq remains precarious and that it is the government's duty to protect its population, including members of religious and ethnic minorities. However this must be done with full respect of human rights and the rule of law. Amnesty International has on numerous occasions strongly condemned human rights abuses committed by armed groups in Iraq.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty unconditionally as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and calls on Iraq to end executions as a step toward complete abolition of the death penalty.

[Amnesty Report, *NEW ORDER, SAME ABUSES: Unlawful detentions and torture in Iraq*](#)