

To: Sections

The following information was telexed/faxed/e-mailed to UA Coordinators and was not printed for general distribution to the UA network, as only a few appeals were required. This printed version is being sent to sections in the weekly mailing for information only and therefore has an AI Index number.

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: MDE 14/01/91
Distr: UA/SC

TLX 24/91 Fear of Torture or Execution

28 March 1991

IRAQ: Sayyid Mohammad Reza Mousavi al-Khalkhali, aged 63
Sayyid Ja'far Bahrul Uloom, aged 56
Sayyid 'Izzaddin Bahrul Uloom, aged about 55
Sayyid Muhammad Taghi al-Kho'i, aged 32

and:

Sayyid Muhyeddin al-Ghuraif
Sayyid Muhammad Ridha al-Kharsan
Sayyid Muhammad al-Sabzwari
Sayyid Muhammad Ridha al-Sa'idi
Sayyid Muhammad Saleh 'Abd al-Rasul al-Kharsan

The first four people named above, all aides to Grand Ayatollah Abul Qassem al-Kho'i, and 10 relatives of the Grand Ayatollah, were all taken into custody by Iraqi government forces on 20 March when they carried out an armed raid on the Grand Ayatollah's residence in the southern city of Najaf. A number of people attempting to guard the residence are said to have been killed by the troops. Grand Ayatollah Abul Qassem al-Kho'i, Shi'a Islam's most senior cleric, was flown by helicopter to Baghdad where he appeared on television with President Saddam Hussein. During the televised meeting, the Grand Ayatollah appeared to criticise the Shi'a uprising against President Hussein's government which began in southern Iraq a few weeks ago. However, it appears that the 95-year-old cleric, who is known to be in poor health, may have been forced to appear on Iraqi television only under considerable duress.

The Grand Ayatollah was reportedly returned to Najaf on 23 March. He again appeared on Iraqi television on that day and on 24 March, when he was shown apparently being interviewed by Iraqi journalists. Some reports suggest that he is under restriction or house arrest in Najaf.

The four aides and 10 of the Grand Ayatollah's relatives who were detained on 20 March are still being held. They are said to be imprisoned at an unknown place in Baghdad. The relatives include the Grand Ayatollah's daughter, son, his daughter-in-law, and seven of his grandchildren, aged between three and 11 years.

Five other aides of the Grand Ayatollah (also named above) are reported to be missing and may be in the custody of Iraqi government forces. Their whereabouts have been unknown since the morning of 21 March. Unconfirmed reports suggest that one, Sayyid al-Kharsan, may have been killed by Iraqi government soldiers.

There have been numerous reports of torture and killings of rebels and suspected opponents by troops loyal to President Saddam Hussein in recent weeks, and Amnesty International is greatly concerned for the safety of all persons detained by

President Saddam Hussein's forces.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telexes/faxes/letters:

- expressing concern about the reported detention of the first four individuals named above and 10 relatives of the Grand Ayatollah;
- seeking urgent clarification of their fate and whereabouts, and assurances that they are not subject to torture, ill-treatment or threatened with execution;
- urging their immediate, unconditional release if they are held solely because of their association with the Grand Ayatollah;
- seeking clarification also of reports that the other five named aides may have been detained and regarding their current whereabouts;
- seeking clarification of reports that the Grand Ayatollah is being held under house arrest or other restrictions and assurances that he is not subject to any form of ill-treatment.

APPEALS TO: Note: As it is not possible to communicate directly with Baghdad please organize appeals of no more than 20 appeals per section to diplomatic representatives of Iraq in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or with your section office, if sending appeals after 9 May 1991.