

# URGENT ACTION

## TARIQ AZIZ AND TWO OTHER MEN FACE EXECUTION

**Two former government ministers under Saddam Hussain and his former private secretary were sentenced to death on 26 October and could be executed within 30 days if their sentences are confirmed by the appeal court. Amnesty International has stressed that the death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights and should never be used, whatever the gravity of the crime.**

**Tariq Aziz**, 74, former Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq under Saddam Hussain, was sentenced to death on 26 October by the Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal (SICT), together with **Sadoun Shakir**, a former Interior Minister, and **Abed Hamoud**, formerly Saddam Hussain's private secretary. All three were convicted of participating in the killings of opposition political activists under Saddam Hussain, which they deny.

If their sentences are confirmed on appeal, they are likely to be executed by hanging within 30 days. Yesterday's verdict has been criticized by the lawyer who represented Tariq Aziz in his previous trials, who has claimed that its timing is politically-motivated and intended to draw attention away from recent disclosures by Wikileaks concerning torture, unlawful killings and other serious human rights violations committed by the security forces of the present Iraqi government.

Tariq Aziz has been imprisoned since he gave himself up to US forces shortly after the US-led invasion in 2003 that ended Saddam Hussain's rule in Iraq. In previous trials before the SICT, he was sentenced to a 15 year prison term in connection with executions of merchants carried out in 1992 and a seven year term related to the forcible displacement of members of the large Kurdish minority.

Amnesty International has previously questioned the fairness of trials before the SICT, which was established to try Saddam Hussain and others accused of responsibility for the crimes committed during his rule. In particular, the SICT has been subject to political interference, undermining its independence.

The death penalty was suspended for a time after the US-led invasion of Iraq but restored in August 2004. Since then, hundreds of people have been sentenced to death and many have been executed. Amnesty International considers the death penalty to be a violation of the right to life and the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English, Arabic or your own language:

- urging that the death sentences imposed on Tariq Aziz, Sadoun Shakir and Abed Hamoud are commuted if they are confirmed by the appeal court;
- recognizing the right of governments to bring to justice those responsible for serious crimes but insisting that the death penalty is a violation of the right to life and the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment;
- calling on the authorities to commute all death sentences and declare a moratorium on executions;

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 DECEMBER 2010 TO:

#### President

His Excellency Jalal Talabanikh Hamad  
President of the Republic of Iraq  
Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma'aridh)  
Baghdad, Iraq

**Salutation: His Excellency**

#### Prime Minister

His Excellency Nuri Kamil al-Maliki  
Prime Minister  
Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma'aridh)  
Baghdad, Iraq

**Salutation: His Excellency**

#### **And copies to:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs  
His Excellency Hoshyar Zebari  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma'aridh)  
Baghdad, Iraq

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Tariq Aziz, a member of Iraq's Christian minority, was well known internationally as Iraq's Foreign Minister under Saddam Hussain, when he travelled widely. He was named as one of those "most wanted" by the Bush administration in the USA at the time of and following the US-led invasion of Iraq which overthrew Saddam Hussain in 2003 and led to the former dictator's ultimate capture, trial before the SICT and execution. However, Tariq Aziz gave himself up to US forces soon after the invasion and was then held in US custody for several years before being handed over to the Iraqi authorities who put him on trial before the SICT for alleged crimes committed during the rule of Saddam Hussain. In two previous trials, he was sentenced to 15 and seven year prison terms in connection with the execution of a number of merchants in 1992 and the forcible relocation of members of the Kurdish minority, which was accompanied by very severe human rights violations. While in prison, he has suffered a stroke and is reported to be in poor health.

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