

URGENT ACTION

15 MEN AT IMMINENT RISK OF EXECUTION

Fifteen men, alleged to be members of armed groups, were sentenced to death on 16 June, only days after “confessions” by several of them were broadcast on Iraqi television. They may not have received a fair trial and are at imminent risk of execution.

The 15 men, including **Ibrahim Najm ‘Abboud, Firas Hassan Fleih al-Juburi, Fadhel Ibrahim al-Juburi, Haydar Mut’eb ‘Abdel-Qader, Hikmat Fadhel Ibrahim, Sayyid Hamadi Ahmed** and **Sofian Jassem Mohammad** were sentenced to death on 16 June by the Central Criminal Court of Iraq after “confessions” by several of them were shown on the Iraqi TV channel al-‘Iraqiya in late May and early June 2011. The 15, said to be members of armed groups in Iraq, were found guilty of murdering dozens of people, including women and children, and the rape of women and girls, including the bride, at a wedding party in a village near al-Taji, north of Baghdad, in June 2006.

Amnesty International is concerned the 15 men may not have received a fair trial according to international standards for fair trial. The televised “confessions” by some of the men may have been obtained through duress.

The men were reportedly detained for several weeks incommunicado, that is without access to their legal representatives or relatives. This increases the risk of detainees being tortured or otherwise ill-treated, including the risk of being coerced into making confessions. In addition, at least some – possibly all – of the families were not informed about the start of the trial, which also raises serious concerns. This prevented them from consulting with the defendants on the appointment of legal representatives of their own choosing, a right guaranteed under international standards for fair trial. Given the grave nature of the charges it is of particular concern that the defendants may not have had adequate legal representation. The trial is said to have lasted only a few days.

Several Iraqi government officials publicly called for the public execution of the 15 men even before the trial had been completed, which jeopardised their right to a fair trial and violates the presumption of innocence, a fundamental principle in criminal law. On 14 June 2011 the Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council is reported to have said during a press conference that those detained in connection with the al-Taji wedding massacre “will be executed as soon as their death sentences are ratified by the Presidency.”

If the death sentences are upheld by the Court of Cassation, they will be submitted to the President for ratification.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic or English:

- Expressing concern that the 15 people may not have received a fair trial according to international standards for fair trial;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that concerns about violations of international standards of fair trial will be addressed and prevented in the future proceedings of this case;
- Calling on the authorities to declare an immediate moratorium on executions.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS TO THE IRAQI EMBASSY IN YOUR COUNTRY AND ADDRESSED TO THE TARGETS BELOW BEFORE 2 AUGUST 2011 TO:

Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Defence and Interior
His Excellency Nuri Kamil al-Maliki,
Prime Minister
Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma’aridh)
Baghdad, Iraq
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Human Rights
His Excellency Mohammad Shayaa al-Sudani
Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma’aridh)
Baghdad, Iraq
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice
Hassan al-Shammari
Convention Centre (Qasr al-Ma’aridh)
Baghdad, Iraq
Salutation: Your Excellency

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

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Over the years many defendants have been sentenced to death in Iraq on the basis of “confessions” which they made as a result of torture in pre-trial detention, when they were held incommunicado and had no access to lawyers of their choosing. Some have been executed on the basis of such “confessions”.

The death penalty has been used very extensively in Iraq. Hundreds of people have been sentenced to death since the death penalty was reinstated by the Iraqi government in 2004, following a one-year suspension by the then Head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), Paul Bremer. The government gives very little information, including statistics, about executions. At least 1,000 people are said to be on death row. Amnesty International is opposed to the death penalty in all cases because it is a violation of two fundamental human rights, as laid down in Articles 3 and 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: a) the right to life, and b) the right not to be tortured or subject to any cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment. The organization considers the death penalty to be the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Amnesty International has repeatedly condemned human rights abuses by armed groups in Iraq, some of which are war crimes and crimes against humanity, including kidnapping, torture and killing of civilians, and continues to call for those responsible to be brought to justice.

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