

Further Information on UA 02/07 (MDE 14/001/2007, 04 January 2007) and follow-up (MDE 14/003/2007, 15 January 2007) –Imminent execution/possible death sentence**IRAQ****Taha Yassin Ramadhan (m)**

On 25 January the Trials Chamber of the Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal (SICT) convened to consider the Appeals Chamber's request to increase the sentence of life imprisonment against former vice-president Taha Yassin Ramadhan. However, for reasons that remain unclear, the session was postponed until 12 February. Taha Yassin Ramadhan remains at risk of being sentenced to death and executed.

Taha Yassin Ramadhan received a life sentence on 5 November 2006 in connection with the killing of 148 people from the village of al-Dujail, north of Baghdad, after a failed attempt to assassinate former president Saddam Hussain in 1982. However, on 26 December the SICT's Appeals Chamber referred the case back to the court requesting a more stringent sentence. Three other defendants in the case, including Saddam Hussain, were sentenced to death and executed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International welcomed the decision to bring Saddam Hussain to justice for the human rights violations committed by his government, but this should have been through a fair trial process and without recourse to the death penalty. In the event, the trial, which opened in October 2005 in Baghdad, was unfair. It was marked by political interference and was widely criticised for failing to satisfy international standards for fair trial. No adequate measures were taken to ensure the protection of witnesses and defence lawyers, three of whom were assassinated during the course of the trial. On several occasions, Amnesty International raised its concerns about the trial in public documents.

In a statement issued on 24 January 2007, the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and the Chairperson Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said "International law allows the imposition of capital punishment only within rigorous legal constraints, including respect of fair trial standards. However, these standards were not guaranteed by the Iraqi High Tribunal".

Since the reintroduction of the death penalty in Iraq in August 2004, scores of people have been sentenced to death and there has been a rapid rise in the number of executions, with at least 65 people put to death in 2006 alone, many of them after trials which may have been unfair.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern that the trial of Taha Yassin Ramadhan before the Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal failed to meet international fair trial standards;
- recognizing the right of governments to bring to justice those responsible for serious crimes but insisting that this be done through a fair trial and without resort to the death penalty;
- urging for Taha Yassin Ramadhan not to be sentenced to death and to be re-tried in accordance with international fair trial standards;
- urging for all trials before the Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal to be fair and without the imposition of the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:Prime Minister

Nuri Kamil al-Maliki

E-mail: iraqigov@yahoo.com**Salutation:** Your ExcellencyMinister of Justice

Hashim al-Shibli

E-mail: minister@iraqi-justice.org**deputy@iraqi-justice.org****Salutation:** Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hoshiyar Zebari

E-mail: press@iraqmofa.net**Salutation:** Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Please send one copy of your appeal to the Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal 'For information', without addition or amendment to the text of the appeal:

General Manager

Administration Department

Supreme Iraqi Criminal Tribunal

Fax: + 964 1 743 2482

In addition, please ask the Iraqi embassy or Iraq diplomatic representative accredited to your country to send copies to the Human Rights Minister, Wajdan Mikhail.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 February 2007.*****