

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 248/94 (MDE 14/04/94, 24 June 1994) - Amputation

IRAQ            Two men sentenced to amputation for theft

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Amnesty International has received unconfirmed reports that the two men convicted in June 1994 of stealing carpets from the Bahriz al-Kabir mosque had their sentences of amputation carried out in July.

This was the first such sentence since Islamic judicial punishments for theft were introduced in early June 1994, apparently in response to the rapid rise in crime resulting from the worsening economic conditions being experienced in Iraq since the imposition of UN sanctions in 1990. People convicted of theft will face the punishment of amputation of one hand, followed by amputation of one foot if they offend a second time.

Amnesty International considers amputation to be cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, prohibited internationally by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which Iraq ratified on 25 January 1971. Iraq is not a State Party to the UN Convention against Torture, but the amputation sentences contravene Iraq's obligations under its Unilateral Declaration against Torture or Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment which Iraq made on 3 September 1979.

In July, two other men convicted of theft were sentenced to amputation of the right hand and to having two lines tattooed on their foreheads (see UA 319/94, MDE 14/05/94, 1 September 1994).

No further action is required on UA 248/94. Thank you to all who sent appeals.