

URGENT ACTION



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3 December 2009

UA 324/09

Death penalty

IRAQ

Hundreds of prisoners, including 17 women

The Iraqi authorities are preparing to execute hundreds of prisoners, including 17 women. They have exhausted all their appeals, and could be put to death at any time.

More than 900 people, including 17 women, are currently reported to be on death row in Iraq and to have exhausted all forms of appeal. Their death sentences are said to have been ratified by the Presidential Council, meaning that they could be executed at any time.

At least 120 people are known to have been executed so far in 2009, and it appears that the Iraqi authorities intend to carry out these executions in advance of national elections scheduled for January (although these elections are now likely to be delayed) despite national and international pressure against the use of the death penalty in Iraq. The condemned prisoners have been convicted of offenses such as murder and kidnapping, but many of them are likely to have been sentenced after unfair trials.



The 17 women are likely to include a group who had been awaiting execution at the 5th section (*al-Shu'ba al-Khamissa*) of Baghdad's al-Kadhimiya Prison. They were the subject of UA 195/09, 21 July 2009.

Iraqi press reports suggest that the government wants to present itself as being tough on crime and capable of overcoming the difficult security situation in the country before the national elections in 2010. Opposition politicians have expressed concern that executions may be carried out to allow the ruling party to gain political advantage ahead of the elections, and have called on the government to temporarily suspend all executions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the reintroduction of the death penalty in August 2004, at least 1,000 people have been sentenced to death and scores have been executed. There are no official figures for the number of prisoners facing execution or the number of executions that are carried out. So far in 2009 at least 120 people have been executed. After all avenues of appeal have been exhausted, death sentences are referred to the Presidential Council, composed of the President and the two Vice-Presidents, for ratification, after which they are carried out. The President, Jalal Talabani, opposes the death penalty and delegates his ratification powers to the two Vice-Presidents, who do not oppose the use of the death penalty. Once their death sentences have been ratified by the Presidential Council, condemned prisoners can be executed at any time.

Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- Expressing concern that hundreds of people are facing imminent execution
- Urging the authorities to put an immediate stop to these executions and commute all death sentences
- Urging them to establish an immediate moratorium on executions

APPEALS TO:

Please send appeals to the Iraqi Embassy asking for them to be forwarded to the following authorities:

President

Jalal Talabani

Salutation: Your Excellency

Vice-President

Tariq al-Hashimi

Salutation: Your Excellency

Vice-President

‘Adil ‘Abdul Mahdi

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Prime Minister

Nuri Kamil al-Maliki

Ambassador Samir Shakir Mahmood Sumaida'ie
Embassy of the Republic of Iraq
3421 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington DC 20007

E-mail: amboffice@iraqembassy.org

Fax: 1 202 333 1129

Phone: 1 202 742 1600 EXT 136

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.

Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 14 January 2010.