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Iraq: Relentless executions must end

"The high rate of executions in Iraq shows a continuing disregard for human life", Amnesty International said today calling for an immediate moratorium.

"The Iraqi Government must put an end to the continuing executions of suspected opponents", Amnesty International said today.

The latest victim known to Amnesty International is 'Abd al-Wahad al-Rifa'i who was hanged after he had been held in prison without charge or trial for more than two years on suspicion of being in contact with the Iraqi opposition abroad. On 26 March 2001 his family in Baghdad collected his body from the Baghdad Security Headquarters. The body reportedly bore clear marks of torture including the pulling out of toe-nails and swelling on his right eye.

Also in March 2001 three officers in the Iraqi air forces, Sa'eed 'Abd al-Majid 'Abd al-Ilah, Fawzi Hamed al-'Ubaidi and Fares Ahmad al-'Alwan, were executed by firing squad. During the same month an army major-general, Tariq Sa'dun, was executed reportedly for criticising the government.

Hundreds of political prisoners and detainees are executed in Iraq every year. The Iraqi Government rarely announces executions or makes public any official statistics in relation to the death penalty. In many cases it is impossible to determine whether the reported executions are judicial or extrajudicial given the secrecy surrounding them.

In October 2000, dozens of women accused of prostitution were beheaded without any judicial process in Baghdad and other cities. Men suspected of procurement were also beheaded. The killings were reportedly carried out, in the presence of representatives of the Ba'ath Party and the Iraqi Women's General Union. Members of Feda'iyye Saddam, a militia created in 1994 by 'Uday Saddam Hussain, the eldest son of the President, used swords to execute the victims in front of their homes.

Some victims were reportedly killed for political reasons. Amongst those beheaded were Fatima 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Rahman, Shadya Shaker Mahmoud and Iman Qassem Ahmad, who were all beheaded in Mosul.

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