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On 9 March 2009 the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council informed Amnesty International that Iraq's Presidential Council has ratified the death sentences of 128 people, whose sentences had been confirmed by the Cassation Court. Consequently, all 128 people are facing imminent execution. The authorities are said to be planning to carry out the executions in batches of 20 a week.

No details were made available by the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Council regarding the individual cases of the 128 people who are at risk of imminent execution, including their identities. It is not known whether any of the 128 now facing imminent execution include prisoners that have been transferred from the custody of US forces following the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the governments of the USA and Iraq which came into force on 01 January 2009.

The death sentences were originally passed by criminal courts in Baghdad, Basra and other cities and provinces on charges under Iraq's Penal Code and the Anti-Terrorism law that include murder and kidnapping. Amnesty International fears that many may have been convicted after trials that failed to conform to international standards of fair trial.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The death penalty was suspended in 2003 while Iraq was under occupation by a US-led coalition. However, since its reintroduction by the Iraqi government in August 2004, hundreds of people have been sentenced to death and scores have been executed. At least 65 people were put to death in 2006 alone, many of them after unfair trials.

In 2007 at least 199 people were sentenced to death and 33 were executed, and in 2008 at least 285 people were sentenced to death and at least 34 executed. The totals could be much higher as there are no official figures for the number of prisoners facing execution and the Iraqi press's reporting of death sentences is erratic at best. The Presidential Council, which ratifies death sentences, is composed of the President and the two Vice-Presidents.

On 14 December 2008 Iraq and the USA signed the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) which opened the way for the transfer of thousands of detainees from US to Iraqi custody and the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq by the end of 2011.

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

- expressing concerns that 128 people are facing imminent execution;
- urging the Iraqi authorities to commute these and all other death sentences;
- calling on the Iraqi authorities to establish an immediate moratorium on executions.

## **APPEALS TO:**

Please send appeals via the Iraqi embassy or diplomatic representative in your country, asking them to forward your appeals to:

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hoshyar Zebari

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Human Rights

Wajdan Mikhail Salam

Fax: +9641 538 2007

Salutation: Your Excellency

and to diplomatic representatives of Iraq accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 April.