

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

26 August 2015

Index: MDE 14/2337/2015

The resumption of executions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is a step backwards

Amnesty International has today condemned the executions of one man and two women after a court in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) convicted them of murder last year. The resumption of executions, which ends the region's hiatus on executions, is a serious step backwards, the organization said.

On 12 August, Farhad Jaafar Mahmood, and his two wives, Berivan Haider Karim and Khuncha Hassan Ismaeil, were hanged after a court in the city of Dohuk sentenced them to death in April 2014 for the abduction and murder of two school girls in 2011 and 2012.

Their sentences were recently ratified by Mas'ud Barzani, the President of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) after being upheld by the Court of Cassation; this ratification allowed the executions to be carried out. Death sentences require ratification by the President before they become final.

The executions are the first to be carried out since 2008; President Barzani refrained from ratifying death sentences during the seven-year hiatus on executions. According to media reports, the number of those on death row in KRI has reached 205 this year.

Amnesty International is extremely concerned that the resumption of executions will lead to further executions; as the number of those on death row continues to rise and pressure mounts on the KRG to respond to the security situation caused by the fight against the armed group calling itself the Islamic State.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. The death penalty violates the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; it is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

The resumption of executions in the KRI now casts doubt on the future of a draft law, which had the prospect of abolishing the death penalty, that the Human Rights Committee of the Kurdistan Parliament prepared and submitted to Parliament in 2011.

Amnesty International calls on the KRG to halt all planned executions; commute, without delay, the death sentences of all persons on death row; and establish an official moratorium on all executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.