

Press Release

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Iraqi courts should dispense justice, not revenge **Statement by Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

Strasbourg, 12.02.2007 - Former Vice-President of Iraq Taha Yasin Ramadan, is the most recent official to be sentenced to death for the crimes committed by the regime of Saddam Hussein. The High Tribunal has ignored the appeal filed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, who said that executing Taha Yasin Ramadan would violate international law.

This is a regrettable decision, and the international community cannot ignore it. Taha Yasin Ramadan and his like should be sent to prison to pay for their crimes, not allowed to become martyrs. The courts in Iraq should dispense justice instead of revenge. Successive condemnations to death against members of the former regime, often followed by botched executions, are undermining the prospects for a reconciled, stable and peaceful Iraq. Every state orchestrated killing is likely to exacerbate the chaos and violence which dominates the lives of the Iraqi people. This is why executions are also detrimental to the interests of the international community and especially the countries which have deployed troops in Iraq. It is time for the killing to stop, and it is time for European governments to take the lead and say so clearly and forcefully.

The death sentence for Taha Yasin Ramadan comes on the day of yet another string of bomb attacks which killed more than 70 people in Baghdad. I would like to express my solidarity with the Iraqi people and encourage the authorities to reinforce their efforts to put an end to these despicable terrorist acts.

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