

# IRAQ

## REPUBLIC OF IRAQ

**Head of state and government:** Saddam Hussain

**Capital:** Baghdad

**Population:** 23.1 million

**Official language:** Arabic

**Death penalty:** retentionist

**Hundreds of people, among them political prisoners including possible prisoners of conscience, were executed. Hundreds of suspected political opponents, including army officers suspected of planning to overthrow the government, were arrested and their fate and whereabouts remained unknown. Torture and ill-treatment were widespread and new punishments, including beheading and the amputation of the tongue, were reportedly introduced. Non-Arabs, mostly Kurds, continued to be forcibly expelled from their homes in the Kirkuk area to Iraqi Kurdistan.**

## Background

Continuing economic sanctions, imposed by UN Security Council resolutions following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, contributed to a deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation. Many governments and non-governmental organizations criticized the sanctions. In February, two senior UN officials, the head of the humanitarian program in Iraq and the head of the World Food Programme in Iraq, resigned over concerns about their impact. From August until the end of the year many countries, including France and the Russian Federation, sent flights carrying humanitarian aid to Iraq, in most cases with the approval of the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee.

The government of Iraq continued to reject UN Resolution 1284, adopted in December 1999. This established a new arms inspection body, the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), and provided for the lifting of sanctions if the government allowed arms inspections to be renewed.

Air strikes by US and United Kingdom (UK) forces against Iraqi targets continued, reportedly resulting in further civilian deaths. According to Iraqi government figures, around 300 people have been killed since the air strikes began in December 1998.

In March a new parliament was elected. All 165 candidates of the ruling Ba'ath Party were elected, including 'Uday Saddam Hussain, the President's eldest son. The remaining 55 seats were won by pro-government independent candidates and a further 30 deputies were appointed by the government to represent Iraqi Kurdistan, two provinces in northern Iraq ruled by Kurdish political parties and which are not under central government control.

In April the UN Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution condemning the "systematic, widespread and extremely grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Government of Iraq" and extended for a further year the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Iraq.

## Death penalty

The large-scale application of the death penalty continued. Hundreds of people, including possible prisoners of conscience, were executed. The victims included army officers suspected of having links with the Iraqi opposition abroad or plotting to overthrow the government and Shi'a Muslims suspected of anti-government activities. In many cases it was impossible to determine whether the executions were judicial or extrajudicial, given the secrecy surrounding them.

☞ In February, 38 Republican Guard officers were executed. They were arrested in January, reportedly after a failed attempt to assassinate the President. Those executed included General 'Abd al-Karim Hussain al-Dulaimi, head of the Republican Guard's second brigade.

☞ A Jordanian national, Dawud Salman al-Dallu, was executed in Abu Ghraib Prison in Baghdad in June after being convicted of espionage. He had been detained since 1993. The date and details of his trial were not known.

☞ Seven employees at the government's Central Computer Department were executed in July on charges of treason. They reportedly imported a computer system that could be used to send data abroad.

☞ 'Ali Hassan, 'Ali Kamal, Hamid Na'im, all officers in the Republican Guard and originally from southern Iraq, were arrested in Baghdad in January, reportedly on suspicion of contact with an Iraqi opposition group abroad. They were sentenced to death and executed by firing squad in September.

## Extrajudicial executions

In October 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, used swords to execute the victims in front of their homes. Some victims were reportedly killed for political reasons.

☞ Dr Najat Mohammad Haydar, an obstetrician in Baghdad, was beheaded in October after being accused of prostitution. However, she was reportedly arrested before the introduction of the policy to behead prostitutes and was said to have been critical of corruption within the health services.

☞ In October several women were beheaded in Mosul in northern Iraq. They included Fatima 'Abdallah 'Abd al-Rahman, Shadya Shaker Mahmoud and Iman Qassem Ahmad.

## Torture/ill-treatment

Political prisoners and detainees were subjected to brutal forms of torture. The bodies of many of those executed had visible signs of torture, including the gouging out of the eyes, when they were returned to their families. Common methods of physical torture included electric shocks or cigarette burns to various parts of the body, pulling out of fingernails, rape, long periods of suspension by the limbs, beating with cables, *falaqa* (beating on the soles of the feet) and piercing of hands with an electric drill. Psychological torture included threats to arrest and harm relatives of the detainee or to rape a female relative in front of the detainee, mock executions and long periods in solitary confinement.

☞ In June Najib al-Salihi, a former army general who fled Iraq in 1995 and joined the Iraqi opposition, was sent a videotape showing the rape of a female relative. Shortly afterwards he reportedly received a telephone call from the Iraqi intelligence service, asking him whether he had received the gift and informing him that his relative was in their custody.

Amputation of the tongue was reportedly approved by the authorities in mid-2000 as a new penalty for slander or abusive remarks about the President or his family.

☞ In September a man reportedly had his tongue amputated by members of *Feda'iyye Saddam* in Baghdad for slandering the President. He was said to have been driven around after the punishment while information about his alleged offence was broadcast through a loudspeaker.

## Arrests of suspected political opponents

During the year hundreds of people were arrested; their fate and whereabouts remained unknown. Those targeted included Shi'a Muslims suspected of anti-government activities and army officers accused of links with opposition groups abroad or planning to overthrow the government.

☞ At least 42 Republican Guard officers were arrested in April, reportedly in connection with an attempt to overthrow the government. Among them were Colonel Hashim Jassem Majid, Colonel Falah al-Din Yusuf and Lieutenant-Colonel 'Ali Soltan Mohammad.

☞ In October scores of Shi'a Muslim religious activists were arrested in Baghdad. They included al-Shaikh Khaled Hassan al-Dulaimi, al-Shaikh Mas'ud Hamam 'Abdallah and Sa'ad Mahmoud al-'Ani.

## Forcible expulsion of non-Arabs

Non-Arabs in the Kirkuk region, mainly Kurds but also Turkmen and Assyrians, continued to be expelled to Iraqi Kurdistan. Thousands have been deported in recent years because of their ethnic origin and Kirkuk's strategic location and oil resources. The government encouraged Arabs living in government-controlled areas to move to Kirkuk, and allocated land confiscated from deportees to security personnel.

☞ In October, 78 members of 10 families were expelled to

the area controlled by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). One member of each family was detained until the deportation was completed.

## Iraqi Kurdistan

At the end of 1999 a new regional government in the area controlled by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) included members of four other political parties. In February, in the area controlled by the PUK, the PUK contested municipal elections with 12 other political groups, winning control of 53 out of 58 councils while the remaining five were taken by Islamist parties.

The 1997 cease-fire between the KDP and the PUK remained in force. In February the two parties recommitted themselves to the implementation of the 1998 Washington peace agreement. The KDP released

11 PUK prisoners of war in February and allowed 30 pro-PUK families to return to PUK-controlled Kurdistan. In September the KDP agreed to withdraw its militias from towns under its control. In November both parties agreed to allow the free movement of citizens and the free circulation of printed materials.

However, dissidents were believed responsible for at least a dozen bomb attacks on civilian targets during the year in both areas of Kurdistan. In June, 20 people were reportedly injured when a car bomb exploded in Sulaymania. In November, six people were killed and 17 injured in an explosion in Arbil.

Clashes between forces of the two ruling parties and members of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) left scores dead, including between KDP forces and PKK rebels in July and between PUK and PKK forces in September and October when dozens reportedly died.

In March thousands of Turkish government troops entered Iraqi Kurdistan in pursuit of PKK forces. In August air strikes targeting the PKK resulted in 38 civilians killed and 11 injured. The Turkish authorities reportedly launched an investigation and paid compensation to the victims.

## Arrests of political opponents

Politically motivated arrests continued.

☞ Students who set up an independent union, the Free Students and Youth Union, in 1999 were reportedly targeted for arrest in the area controlled by the PUK. Of 11 students arrested in January, nine were released days or weeks afterwards. It was not known whether the remaining two, Hussain Alek Ahmad and Khaled Khidir Babeker, were still held at the end of 2000.

☞ In March, five people reportedly appeared on television in the KDP-controlled area and confessed to their involvement in bomb attacks and killings since 1997. Four of them were said to be members of the Islamic Movement in Iraqi Kurdistan. Their fate was unknown.

☞ In July the authorities in PUK-controlled Sulaymania briefly detained scores of people, including supporters of the Iraqi Workers' Communist Party (IWCP) and the Independent Women's Organization (IWO). They had protested against

orders to cease their activities and the cutting of their electricity and water supplies. The PUK informed AI that political party headquarters were moved out of residential areas as a safety measure against their becoming targets of armed opposition groups.

☞ Also in July, PUK security forces arrested women sheltering at an IWO refuge in Sulaymania for women abused by their relatives and closed the refuge. Most were released in the days following but the whereabouts of 12 women and five children, who had been at the refuge and were feared arrested, remained unknown at the end of the year.

☞ In October Hiwa Ahmad, a leading IWCP member, was arrested in Sulaymania by members of the PUK security service, *Dezgay Zanyari*. At the end of 2000 his whereabouts were still unknown.

### **Political killings**

Reports of political killings continued to be received.

☞ In Arbil, in KDP-controlled Iraqi Kurdistan, Sirbit Mahmud, leader of the Democratic Nationalist Union of Kurdistan, and Osman Hassan, a parliamentary deputy, were killed by unidentified gunmen in June and July respectively.

☞ Four IWCP members — 'Abdul Basit Muhsin, Mohammad Mustafa, Ibrahim Mohammad Rostam and Hawri Latif — and Omid Nikbin, a member of the opposition Iranian Workers' Communist Party, were killed by PUK security forces in July. The PUK said that their car had failed to stop at a checkpoint, that they had shot and injured two people, and that they were shot dead when the security forces returned fire. No information about an investigation announced by the PUK was available at the end of 2000.

### **Communications with the government and the Kurdish authorities**

AI raised specific concerns with the Iraqi government and leaders of the KDP and PUK. In January the Iraqi government criticized AI's position on sanctions and for not condemning US and UK air strikes strongly enough, but did not address specifically AI's concerns detailed in a 1999 report. In a letter to AI in September, the government said it could identify only one individual from the victims cited in the *Amnesty International Report 2000* and that the person was living in Syria.