



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU concerning the human rights situation in Iraq

The European Union expresses its profound concern over the human rights situation in Iraq. The European Union deplores the reintroduction of executions in Iraq. At least 117 persons are known to have been executed since May this year, when the 2007 suspension of executions was terminated. The EU is concerned by indications that the actual numbers of executions are higher, and that another 900 persons are currently on death row, having exhausted legal remedies. Reports also indicate that Iraq is considering public executions. In this context, the EU expresses its concern at the lack of fair trials, as well as in relation to credible allegations that confessions are obtained under torture.

The EU considers the death penalty a cruel and inhuman punishment and a violation of the right to life. The EU therefore urges the Government of Iraq to resume the *de facto* suspension of the death penalty, pending its abolition. Such a step would be in line with the global trend towards abolition, as demonstrated *inter alia* by recent UN General Assembly resolutions.

P R E S S

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As the Iraqi state is consolidating further, a number of profound challenges have to be addressed, including strengthening governance structures to be able to protect its population from human rights violations. In this respect, the EU reiterates the importance it attaches to the fight against impunity and encourages the Government of Iraq to deepen its efforts to work to improve accountability structures with the view to eradicate impunity. The EU is especially concerned by the difficulty Iraqi authorities are experiencing in preventing the appalling and arbitrary violence directed against vulnerable groups in Iraqi society, such as lethal attacks against ethnic and religious minorities and homosexual men. Arbitrary violence against children is frequent, and is of special concern to the EU.

The situation for human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in Iraq is of concern to the EU. Exposed categories, among which killings and disappearances have been reported in the last few months, include individuals working in women's organisations, and persons advocating against prison conditions and torture. The EU notes with deep concern that insurgent groups have targeted female politicians, civil servants, journalists, and women's rights activists and advocates. Female lawyers representing women in personal status matters are particularly targeted, as well as women providing protection for vulnerable girls and women, such as those threatened with "honour killings". The difficult conditions prevailing for journalists, with members of the press being targeted and killed by militia groups, constitute a serious infringement on the freedom of expression. The EU calls on the Iraqi Government to promote freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including freedom of expression on the Internet.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Montenegro, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.