



Most Iraqis Want to See Saddam Hussein Hang

Posted GMT 9-7-2005 14:56:16

Paris (AsiaNews) -- Saywan Barzani, Kurdish envoy in Europe, defends Iraqi President Jalal Talabani who on Iraqi television said that "Saddam deserves a death sentence 20 times a day". However, the President also said that he would not sign any death warrant.

The statement appears to contradict Talabani's previous opposition to the death penalty. He had already threatened to resign if the Iraqi Special Tribunal charged with trying the former dictator sentenced him to death, but did not renew the threat yesterday during the TV interview.

For Saywan Barzani, who spoke from Paris, there is no contradiction or change in Talabani's views.

"The President," he said, "is a lawyer and a human rights activist. He has spent many years in Europe and has signed a petition against the death penalty proposed by some of his British and French attorney friends."

Mr Barzani, who is the nephew of Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, insisted that Talabani "is against the principle of the death penalty, but for Saddam Hussein, it is different".

In the interview with al-Iraqiya Network, Talabani said that one of the investigators was able "to extract important confessions from Saddam Hussein." Saddam admitted to having ordered an unspecified number of executions during his regime. He said Saddam confessed to the al-Anfal campaign against the Kurds between 1986 and 1989 in which over 100,000 people were slaughtered.

The statement was made after the Iraqi government officially confirmed that the deposed dictator will go on trial on October 19 charged with the killing of 143 Shi'ite villagers in Dujail. If found guilty, he could be hanged before he is tried for any of the other 11 charges brought against him.

According to Saywan Barzani, Talabani must adapt to circumstances that are hard to change.

"In Iraq both people and lawmakers do not want to abolish the death penalty. Ninety per cent of all Iraqis want to see Saddam hang. The President cannot oppose them and so will delegate authority to his Vice-Presidents as he did in the latest death penalty cases that involved three common criminals."

"My not signing does not mean that I will block the decision of the court," Talabani said. And "Saddam deserves a death sentence 20 times a day because he tried to assassinate me 20 times," added Talabani, who once led Kurdish rebels against Saddam's regime.

"Saddam is a criminal and a blood-thirsty dictator," Barzani said. "Recent investigations by experts on the Kurdish question indicate that the Baathist regime was responsible for some 2 to 3 million victims".

"Should the Iraqi Special Court decide for the death penalty, there should not be any new violence," he stressed.

"No one can justify the dictator's crimes. Even the terrorists have never said anything in his favour. They are against the occupation and the US, but no one has said they were defending Saddam Hussein".

Under Saddam, Iraqi Kurds were heavily persecuted. In the 1980s, they suffered a great deal from the regime's repression, including thousands of civilians who were killed with chemical weapons.