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IRAQ

Iraq Opens Mass Grave in Nineveh to Identify IS Badoush Prison Massacre Victims



AFP in Middle East Eye

On Sunday, Iraqi authorities announced that the remains of 123 people killed by Islamic State (IS) militants had been exhumed from a mass grave in order to identify them. The mass grave, located in the village of Badoush in the Nineveh province, held the remains of Iraqi prisoners killed in the Badoush prison massacre.

In June 2014, IS militants attacked the prison north of Mosul, freeing Sunni Muslim inmates. They then forced 583 Shia Muslim prisoners into a truck before driving them to a ravine for execution. IS abuses at the jail extended beyond the massacre as the militants then used the prison to hold captive over 500 Yazidi women.

In recent weeks, family members of former Badoush prisoners have given DNA samples, in hopes of identifying the victims and receiving closure. During the previous oppressive regime, families often lost track of their relatives jailed at Badoush, leaving some wondering for decades if their relatives were dead or alive. The governor of Nineveh province, Najm Al Jubburi, told the press that “thousands of families are waiting to know what happened to their relatives.” One of those relatives, Abbas Mohammad, told reporters that his son had been jailed at Badoush after being arrested by US forces in 2005. “After 17 years of not knowing whether my son is alive or dead, I need an answer.”

In March 2017, the mass grave was discovered after Iraqi forces regained control of the area. Hashed forces reported two large mass graves containing the remains of around 500 civilian prisoners in total. The grave itself is one of more than 200 that IS forces left behind, according to UN figures. The UN believes at least 12,000 people were buried in these graves, leading to accusations against IS of genocide in Iraq. The UN investigators concluded in May that there was “clear and convincing” evidence that genocide was committed by IS against Yazidis and other minorities.

Brief review

Lebanon – On June 15, 53 Lebanese, regional, and international rights groups, along with 62 survivors and families of victims, published a letter calling for a UN Human Rights Council probe into the August 2020 Beirut port explosion. Rights groups have documented systemic flaws in the investigations which the Lebanese authorities have delayed for almost a year. The letter calls for the investigative probe to identify whether the State’s negligence directly caused or contributed to unlawful deaths.

Syria – At least 13 civilians were killed, and several more were wounded, in two artillery attacks against Afrin in northern Syria this week. Afrin is currently controlled by Turkey-backed fighters. The first attack struck a residential area, and the second hit al-Shifa hospital. Two of those killed were medical staff at the hospital, and two others were ambulance drivers. Turkey has blamed Syrian Kurdish groups for the attack, though it is not yet confirmed.

Iran - Presidential front-runner Ebrahim Raisi has received immense pushback from domestic critics and international human rights organizations who point to the role he played in the so-called “Death Committee.” As a prosecutor for the district of Karaj and Hamadan province, he was one of four men who condoned the executions of thousands of suspected members of a political party.. His actions did not grant victims a proper due process and quickly evolved into politically based violence.

EGYPT

Egyptian Authorities Upheld Death Sentences for Twelve Muslim Brotherhood Members



REUTERS/Amr Abdallah Dalsh

The highest Egypt's Civilian Court upheld death sentences for 12 senior Muslim Brotherhood members. The execution is pending approval by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. The sentences includes Abdul Rahman Al-Bar, commonly described as the group's top religious scholar, Mohamed El-Beltagi, a former member of parliament, and Osama Yassin, a former minister. In its ruling, the court said that those condemned to death were convicted of "arming criminal gangs which attacked residents and resisted policemen, as well as possessing firearms and ammunition and bomb-making material." A judicial source said that the rulings are final and cannot be appealed.

This is not the first time many Muslim Brotherhood figures have been sentenced to death in cases related to the unrest that followed the military's coup d'état in 2013. A month after the coup, security forces raided a square and killed at least 800 people in one day. According to the authorities, protesters were armed, and the forced dispersal was a vital "counterterrorism" measure.

Amnesty International and other rights groups have documented a sharp rise in the number of executions in Egypt, with at least 51 carried out so far this year. Amnesty International said that Egyptian authorities must immediately establish an official moratorium on executions instead of continuing to use the death penalty by upholding death sentences following convictions in grossly unfair mass trials.

In 2018, an Egyptian court sentenced 75 defendants in the trial to death and the rest to varying jail sentences, including 10 years of Morsi's son Osama. Civilians were also condemned to the death penalty in Egypt. Sisi's government outlawed the Brotherhood in 2013 and has overseen a widespread crackdown on thousands of its supporters. Amnesty International's Research and Advocacy Director for the Middle East and North Africa, Philip Luther, said that death sentences cast a shadow over the country's entire justice system.

Brief review

Lebanon – Migration of women from Ethiopia to Lebanon was a viable way to build a better future. Now stories of women mysteriously disappearing in Lebanon are coming out. Al Jazeera, for example, reported this week on the exploitation and disappearance of women in recent years. The Ethiopian government issued a migration ban in 2008 that restricted migration to Lebanon. Due to the irregularity of labor migration afterwards, it has been incredibly hard to keep track of human rights violations since.

Palestine – Israel launched air strikes on the Gaza Strip this Wednesday which marked the first major flare-up since a ceasefire on May 2. The Israel military said that the air strikes were in response to incendiary balloons reportedly launched from the Palestinian Territories. The rally came as tensions remain over Israel's planned expulsion of Palestinian families from the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah.

Saudi Arabia - Mustafa al-Darwish was first arrested in 2015 and charged with insurrection based on evidence going back to 2011, while he was still a minor. The Saudi government alleged that al-Darwish confessed of his crimes, which lead to his lawful execution. Amnesty International reports that al-Darwish had recanted his confession due to the fact that it was extracted under torture. Saudi Arabia committed last year to stop imposing the death sentence on people who committed crimes while they were still underage

TUNISIA

Security Forces Clash with Protestors Demanding an End to Police Brutality in Tunis



Mohamed Krit/SIPA USA/ PA Imagese

A repressive police force and its use of violence against civilians has brought the Tunisian people to the streets, ten years after the Arab Spring, to demand a halt to the violence. This wave of protests came after a graphic video showed policemen undressing and violently assaulting a 15-year-old on the streets of Sidi Hassine. Two days prior, 30-year-old Ahmed Ben Ammar died while in police custody also in Sidi Hassine. Ben Ammar's family accused the police of beating him to death while under custody.

After the outrageous video was shared on social media, Tunisians in the neighborhoods of Sidi Hassine, Ettadhamen, and Intilaka, gathered to protest against police brutality and demand that those involved in the abuses be held accountable. Protests in Tunisia have left a dark record of human rights violations, with the police deeply suppressing and attacking protesters on the streets. The recent violent response against protesters is affecting three of the most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in the Tunisian capital, as well as minors, who compose the majority of those protesting on the streets. In January of this year, for example, police threatened, arrested and tortured more than 600 minors according to the Tunisian League of Human Rights (LTDH).

Freedom of expression is enshrined in the 2014 Tunisian constitution, one of the biggest accomplishments of the Arab Spring. The biggest challenge facing Tunisia now are bills that seek to curtail Tunisians' freedoms. One of them is a bill on the "protection of security forces," which Parliament has tried to pass since 2014. An initial draft of the law authorized criminal charges against speech deemed to be "denigrating" to the police. Later drafts still include Article 7, which grants "security forces criminal immunity for the use of excessive lethal force to repel attacks against citizens in circumstances perceived to constitute 'serious threats'". This bill is in direct violation of the principles of equality between citizens and the right to life for all Tunisians (Articles 21, 22, and 23 of the Constitution) as well as the right to life and freedom of expression granted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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