

Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Foreign Minister

Written by W.J.Pais

By HAMID AHMED and BARBARA SURK, Associated Press Hamid Ahmed
And Barbara Surk, Associated Press
– 57 mins ago

BAGHDAD – The international face of
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, Tariq Aziz, was sentenced to death by hanging Tuesday for persecuting Shiites just over three months after the Americans transferred him to Iraqi government custody.

Iraqi High Tribunal spokesman Mohammed Abdul-Sahib did not say when the 74-year-old former foreign minister would go to the gallows. Aziz has 30 days to launch an appeal.

Aziz, the only Christian in Saddam's mainly Sunni inner circle, was wearing a blue suit and sat alone in the court. He bowed his head and frequently grasped the handrail in front of him, as the judge read out the verdict.

The Vatican urged Iraq to not carry out the [death sentence](#) and said it may intervene to try to halt it

A spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, said the Vatican hoped that the sentence wouldn't be carried out and added that the Vatican usually would pursue any possible humanitarian intervention to halt an execution via diplomatic channels.

His Jordan-based lawyer, Badee Izzat Aref, accused the government of orchestrating the verdict to divert attention from recent revelations about [prisoner abuse](#) by Iraqi security forces contained in U.S. military documents released last week by the whistleblower site WikiLeaks.

"We are discussing this issue and what next step we should take," Aref told The Associated Press in Amman, the Jordanian capital. "This sentence is not fair and it is politically motivated."

It is a shame, and makes Wiki Leaks necessary for our human race to have a voice. What

more can this world expect after the Wall Street Scam and the Bankers' hypocrisy ! Hope mankind will wake up and fight back. Today's politician will be the target for the next conqueror ! Who will it be ?

[From BBC - John Simpson](#)

It is not hard to detect a whiff of revenge in the Iraqi Supreme Court's decision to sentence Tariq Aziz, one of President Saddam Hussein's most loyal supporters, to death.

The accusation by his lawyer, Badee Izzat Aref, that the verdict is politically motivated, will no doubt be angrily dismissed by most Shia politicians in Iraq. But many Sunni politicians will agree, at least quietly.

Tariq Aziz's sharp brain and even sharper tongue made him a great many enemies.

When Saddam Hussein was overthrown by the **US-led invasion of 2003**, Aziz was one of the most hated of his officials.

There was a clear determination in parts of the dysfunctional administration headed by **Paul Bremer** to see that Tariq Aziz was charged with serious crimes, with the intention of hanging him.

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There is little doubt that Aziz's success in winning support in the Arab world, in Russia, and other areas where hostility to the US-led invasion was strongest had made him a marked man.

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Slowly, though, the US lawyers in Baghdad ceased to insist on his trial for the more serious crimes. But Iraqi lawyers still wanted him put on trial.

He was eventually charged over his **supposed part** in the execution of several dozen merchants in Baghdad and elsewhere for 'profiteering' - in other words, overcharging their customers.

'Saddam's front-man'

The court which tried him heard plenty of accusations that Aziz had argued for the execution of the merchants.



Tariq Aziz claimed he tried to dissuade Saddam Hussein from invading Kuwait

But there was no evidence that a Western court would regard as compelling that he had anything like final responsibility for the carrying out of the executions.

Five months afterwards he received a further seven-year sentence for what amounted to the ethnic cleansing of Kurds.

Again, it was clear that Tariq Aziz had strongly supported the policy. But there was no real evidence of his personal involvement and guilt.

His crime, essentially, was that he was Saddam's front-man, arguing publicly and cleverly for some of his worst policies.

The Iraqi opposition, like the Americans and their supporters, felt a particular hatred for him.

He was a strong supporter of violent action against Shia and other resistance groups - the crime for which he has been sentenced to death.

But again, it is hard to feel that final proof of his involvement in this kind of action was demonstrated.

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Many Iraqis will believe hanging a sick man of 74 will create sympathy for someone who scarcely deserves it”

End Quote

Tariq Aziz was Saddam Hussein's loyal courtier. If he had questioned his judgements, he would have died. This is not an argument for his innocence, but it does temper his direct responsibility for the policies he backed.

'Close to the edge'

Various former figures in Saddam's administration over the years have confirmed that in private, where he dared, Tariq Aziz tried to modify some of his master's views and decisions.

He himself has claimed that he tried to dissuade Saddam from invading Kuwait in 1990, and this seems to be true.

But he was always a dangerous figure, often close to the edge of savage violence.

In January 1991, in the early days of the first Gulf War, I met him in a hotel and started asking him questions he did not like. "If you ask me anything else," he screamed, "I shall have you

liquidated". He was clearly capable of carrying out the threat.

Now, though, Tariq Aziz is an old man, broken in health. **His execution would reflect badly on Iraq's system of justice,** and on the growing influence of extremist Shia on the government.

The carrying out of the death sentence in Iraq in the last five years has not strengthened the country's reputation.

Many Iraqis will also believe that hanging a sick man of 74 will create sympathy for someone who scarcely deserves it.

CNN:

Baghdad, Iraq (CNN) -- Tariq Aziz, one of the best-known faces of the Iraqi government for more than two decades, was sentenced to death Tuesday by the Iraqi High Tribunal for his role in eliminating religious parties during Saddam Hussein's regime, court officials told CNN.

His family was shocked by the verdict, his daughter told CNN.

They had no idea he was going to be sentenced Tuesday, Zainab Aziz said from Amman, Jordan.

"Until last week they were hearing new witnesses in this case," she said, criticizing both the verdict itself and its timing.

"My father served his country for more than 22 years. **He delivered himself to the U.S. Army [after the fall of Hussein] because he wasn't afraid. He didn't do anything wrong. He served his country," she told CNN International's "iDesk" program.**

"He has been wronged," Zainab Aziz said.

"He feels that way and we feel that way because we know he didn't do anything wrong, he only served his country as a foreign minister and that didn't include anything of these bloody crimes he's been tried for right now," she argued.

"I think it's very unfair," she said.

She said her father had little expectation that an appeal would help.

"I don't think he has any hope of coming out" of prison, she said, adding that he is "old and frail.

"He doesn't have any hope, but he is really happy that we are OK, that we are doing fine," she said. "That is his only consolation."

Badi Arif, an attorney who used to represent Aziz, said there is a political motive behind the death sentence.

"Mr. Aziz used to always tell me, 'They'll find a way to kill me, and there is no way for me to escape this,'" Arif told CNN. "But from a legal perspective, this sentence is wrong; this is illegal and this is unexpected."

In March 2009, Aziz was sentenced to 15 years in prison in connection with the 1992 executions of 42 merchants.

Aziz was deputy prime minister from 1981 to 2003, also holding the post of foreign minister for part of that time.

Abed Hameed Mahmoud and Sadoon Shaker, top former regime Baathists, also were sentenced to death for their involvement, court officials said.

Amnesty International urged Iraq not to carry out the sentences, even as it acknowledged the brutality of Hussein's regime.

"Saddam Hussein's rule was synonymous with executions, torture and other gross human rights violations, and it is right that those who committed crimes are brought to justice," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"However, it is vital that the **death penalty, which is the ultimate denial of human rights**, should never be used, whatever the gravity of the crime," he said in a written statement.

The Vatican also opposed the death sentence, spokesman Federico Lombardi told CNN.

"This is not the most adequate way to promote reconciliation and reconstruction of justice and peace in a country that has suffered so much," he said.

[CNN's Mohammed Tawfeeq, Fionnuala Sweeney, Mohammed Jamjoom and Hada Messia contributed to this report.](#)

Past Models for Present Day Rulers

[Oliver Cromwell](#)

Cromwell has been a controversial figure in the [history of the British Isles](#) — considered a [regicidal dictator](#) by historians (such as [David Hume](#)

and

[Christopher Hill](#)

); and as a hero of liberty by

[Thomas Carlyle](#)

and

[Samuel Rawson Gardiner](#)

). In a 2002 BBC poll in Britain, Cromwell was elected as one of the

[Top 10 Britons of all time](#)

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[1](#)

[3](#)

[1](#)

His measures against

[Catholics](#)

in Scotland and Ireland have been characterised as

[genocidal](#)

or near-genocidal,

[1](#)

[4](#)

[1](#)

and in Ireland itself he is widely hated.

[1](#)

[5](#)

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Comment:

History is to be preserved in books. Most rulers do not read it, so they repeat the mistakes of the past, and are bound to meet the same fate as those who resembled them. Those of us who fail to remember the lessons of history, are destined to repeat the mistakes which have been done by others in similar circumstances. Remember the French and October Revolutions? What if the demographic picture of Europe is changed and new forces come to play there, and affect the rest of the so called civilized world?

Bloomberg

Iraq's Aziz May Die in Months, Must Be Freed, Son Says

January 07, 2011, 9:59 AM EST

By Massoud A Derhally and Caroline Alexander

(Updates with son's comment starting in third paragraph, adds details of case starting in fourth.)

Jan. 7 (Bloomberg) -- Saddam Hussein's deputy and former Iraqi foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, may die within months and should be freed from prison "as a humanitarian gesture," his eldest son said.

"He won't survive more than two to three months," Ziad Tariq Aziz said of his father in a phone interview today from Amman, Jordan. The 74-year-old has had three strokes in the eight years he has been in prison and can no longer speak or walk, his son said. The family has sent medicine to his Baghdad jail "but no one knows if he took it or not," he added.

In October, a court set up to try senior members of the former Baathist regime condemned Aziz to death "for the persecution of Islamic parties," including the Shiite Muslim Dawa Party of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. President Jalal Talabani has refused to sign the order, joining the Vatican, Russia and Greece, along with the United Nations and the European Union, in objecting to the sentence, given Aziz's age and health.

At least eight other senior Baathists are being held in Iraq. Their fate remains one of the most delicate issues facing al-Maliki's government, which has pledged to heal sectarian rifts between Shiite Muslims and Sunnis, who dominated Hussein's inner circle, and bring stability to the country as U.S. troops prepare to exit at the end of the year.

Hussein's Execution

Talabani is against the death penalty on principle and has never signed off on an execution,

including the December 2006 hanging of Hussein, which embarrassed the Iraqi government when a video emerged showing the former president being taunted at the gallows by Shiites. Under the constitution, death sentences must be ratified by the president, though an act of parliament or a veto by a vice president can override the presidential decision.

An appeal against his father's death sentence was filed within the legal period of 30 days after he was condemned to die, and no one knows where the process stands, Ziad Aziz said.

The court ruling came as Iraqi leaders competed to form a new government after March's inconclusive elections, and was politically motivated, the son added. Presiding Judge Mahmoud Saleh al-Hassan ran unsuccessfully for parliament as part of al-Maliki's coalition, saying he would humiliate Baathist tyrants.

"The entire world is against the implementation of execution. This is about revenge, not justice," said Ziad Aziz, 44. "They've implicated my father in everything, in every single case you can imagine. He's been apportioned blame for issues that never even fell within the realm of his responsibilities."

Prison Sentences

Before Aziz received the death penalty, he had been sentenced to 15 years in prison for his role in the execution of 42 merchants and a further seven for helping to plan the forced displacement of Kurds from northeastern Iraq. He was acquitted of charges he had a role in the killing of Shiite protesters.

Aziz, a Christian from Mosul, met Hussein in the 1950s when they were activists for the then-banned Baath party and rose through the ranks when it came to power in 1968. When the U.S. issued a deck of cards to portray the most-wanted regime leaders after the 2003 invasion, Aziz was the eight of spades.

Ziad Aziz said he last saw his father on April 24, 2003, the day he surrendered to U.S. forces. Tariq Aziz was held in a U.S.-run prison before being handed over to Iraqi authorities in

July as part of the Obama administration's phased pullout of American forces.

The younger Aziz said al-Maliki's new government should show mercy toward his father, citing the case of Abdel Basset al-Megrahi, who has cancer and was returned to Libya on compassionate grounds in 2009 after being imprisoned in Scotland for the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am plane over the Scottish town of Lockerbie.

"As a humanitarian gesture, release my father," Aziz said.

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Note: When Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was sentenced, the whole world objected, except USA. They were behind then, and they are behind now. For the public, they have no comment, but Iraq can not shake its tail, unless US agrees.