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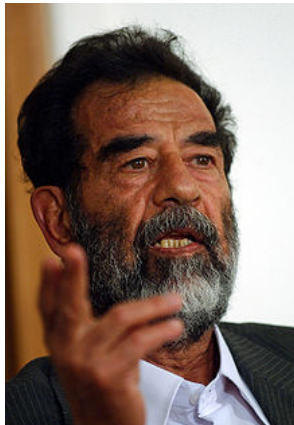


Execution of Saddam Hussein

The **execution of Saddam Hussein** took place on December 30, 2006. He was sentenced to death by hanging, after being found guilty and convicted of [crimes against humanity](#) by the [Iraqi Special Tribunal](#) for the murder of 148 Iraqi Shi'ites in the town of [Dujail](#) in 1982, in retaliation for an assassination attempt against him. ^[1]

Saddam Hussein was President of Iraq from July 16, 1979 until April 9, 2003, when he was deposed during the [2003 invasion of Iraq](#) by U.S.-led Allied Coalition. After his [capture](#) in [ad-Dawr](#), near his hometown [Tikrit](#), he was incarcerated at [Camp Cropper](#). On November 5, 2006, he was sentenced to death by hanging.

On December 30, 2006, he was taken to the prison to be executed. The Iraqi government released an official videotape of his execution, showing him being led to the gallows, and ending after his head was in public controversy arose when an unauthorized cell phone recording of the hanging showed him falling through the trap door of the gallows. The audio, which was not in the official video, revealed taunts between Saddam and the executioners, many of whom were strong supporters of Muqtada Al-Sadr, an Iraqi political leader and militia commander who is a strong opponent of the succeeding (and current) Shiite dominated Iraqi Coalition Provisional Authority, the government and the overall idea of the presence of the United States in Iraq. The unprofessional and undignified atmosphere of the execution drew criticism around the world from nations that both oppose and support [capital punishment](#), including the [Bush Administration](#).



On December 31, 2006, Saddam Hussein's body was returned to his birthplace of [Al-Awja](#), near Tikrit, and was buried near the graves of other family members.

Trial

Main article: [Trial of Saddam Hussein](#)

Held in custody by U.S. forces at [Camp Cropper](#) in Baghdad, on June 30, 2004, Saddam Hussein and eleven senior Ba'athist officials were handed over to the Iraqi government to stand trial for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. A few weeks later, he was charged by the [Iraqi Special Tribunal](#) with the mass killings of the inhabitants of the village of [Dujail](#) in 1982 following a failed assassination attempt against him.

On November 5, 2006, Saddam was found guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced to death by hanging. The verdict and sentencing were both appealed but subsequently affirmed by Iraq's Supreme Court of Appeals. ^[2]

Although the United States approved of the trial, an attempt was made to postpone, stay, or overturn the [execution warrant](#). Attempts were made to contact the Iraqi government to validate the legality of the execution under the new [Iraqi constitution](#). The parliament, claiming that the security issues presented a need to act swiftly, dismissed the request. Further attempts were made to get a stay of execution from the anti-death-penalty President [Jalal Talabani](#) or a clearance that he had no objections. The Iraqi government determined that no clearance from Talabani was necessary. ^[3]

On the afternoon of December 29, 2006, at a federal court in [Washington, D.C.](#), United States, lawyers for Saddam sought unsuccessfully to block his transfer from U.S. custody to the custody of Iraqi officials. [4][5] Meanwhile, officials from the U.S. also tried to delay the execution due to concerns the execution would be seen as Shi'ite retribution. [6]

Execution

Prior to execution

Two days prior to the execution, a letter written by Saddam appeared on the [Ba'ath Party](#) Web site. In the letter, he urged the Iraqi people to unity and to not hate the people of countries that invaded Iraq, like the United States, but instead the decision-makers. He said he was ready to die a [martyr](#) and he said that this is his death sentence. [7] In the hours before the execution, Saddam ate his [last meal](#) of chicken and rice, with a cup of hot water and honey. He then said [prayers](#) and verses from the [Qur'an](#). [8]

Time and place of execution

Saddam was executed by hanging at approximately 06:00 local time (03:00 [GMT](#)) on December 30, 2006, the day [Sunni](#) Iraqis begin celebrating Eid ul-Adha. [9][10][11] Reports conflict as to the exact time of the execution, with some sources reporting the time as 06:00, 06:05, or some, as late as 06:10. [9][11][12] The execution took place at the Iraqi army base [Camp Justice](#), located in Kazimain, a north-eastern suburb of [Baghdad](#). Camp Justice was previously used by Saddam as his military intelligence headquarters, then known as Camp Banzai, where Iraqi civilians were taken to be tortured and executed on the same gallows. Contrary to initial reports, Saddam was executed alone, not at the same time as his co-defendants [Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti](#) and [Awad Hamed al-Bandar](#), who were executed on January 15, 2007, also without the presence of their lawyers.

Execution proceedings

A senior Iraqi official who was involved in the events leading to Saddam's death was quoted as saying, "The Americans wanted to delay the execution by 15 days because they weren't keen on having him executed straight away. But during the day [before the execution] the prime minister's office provided all the documents they asked for and the Americans changed their minds when they saw the prime minister was very insistent. Then it was just a case of finalizing the details." [13] U.S. military spokesman [Maj. Gen. William Caldwell](#) told journalists in Baghdad that after "physical control" of Saddam was given to the Iraqi government, "the multinational force had absolutely no direct involvement with [the execution] whatsoever." [14] There were no U.S. representatives present in the execution room. [15][16]

Reports circulated that Saddam's behavior was "submissive" and that he was carrying the [Qur'an](#) he had been keeping with him throughout his trial before his execution. Al-Rubiae, who was a witness to Saddam's execution, described Saddam as repeatedly shouting "down with [Persians](#) and the Americans." [17] Al-Rubaie reportedly asked Saddam if he had any remorse or fear, to which Saddam replied:

"No, I am a militant and I have no fear for myself. I have spent my life in [jihad](#) and fighting aggression. Anyone who takes this route should not be afraid." [18]

[Sami al-Askari](#), a witness to the execution, said, "Before the rope was put around his neck, Saddam shouted, '[Allahu Akbar](#). The [Muslim Ummah](#) will be victorious and [Palestine](#) is Arab!'" [19] Saddam also stressed that the Iraqis should fight the Americans and the Persians. [20] After the rope was secured, guards shouted various rebukes including "Muqtada! Muqtada! Muqtada!" in reference to [Muqtada al-Sadr](#); Saddam repeated the name mockingly and rebuked the shouts stating, "Do you consider this bravery?" [18][21][22][23][24] A [Shi'a](#) version of an Islamic prayer was also recited by some of those present in the room, an apparent sectarian insult against the [Sunni](#) Saddam. [25] One observer told Saddam:

"Go to hell!"

Saddam replied,

"The hell that is Iraq?" [26]

Another man asked for quiet, saying,

"Please, stop. The man is facing an execution."

Saddam began to recite the [Shahada](#) again. As he neared the end of his second recitation, the platform dropped. [24][27] According to [The New York Times](#), the executioners "cheer their Shi'ite heroes so persistently that one observer [in the execution chambers] makes a remark about how the effort to rein in militias does not seem to be going well." [28] During the drop there was an audible crack indicating that his neck was broken. [29] After Saddam was suspended for a few minutes, the doctor present listened with a [stethoscope](#) for a heartbeat. After he detected none, the rope was cut, and his body was placed in a [coffin](#). [8]

Post-execution stabbings

According to Talal Misrab, the head guard at Saddam's tomb and who also helped in the burial, Saddam was stabbed six times after he was executed. The head of Saddam's tribe, Sheikh Hasan al-Neda, denies this claim. Mowaffak al-Rubaie, Iraq's security advisor, stated, "I oversaw the whole process from A-Z and Saddam Hussein's body was not, not stabbed or mutilated, and he was not humiliated before execution." [30]

Burial

Saddam's body was buried in his birthplace of [Al-Awja](#) in [Tikrit](#), [Iraq](#), near family members, including his two sons [Uday](#) and [Qusay Hussein](#), on December 31, 2006 at 04:00 local time (01:00 [GMT](#)). [31][32][33] His body was transported to Tikrit by a U.S. military helicopter. Saddam was handed over from Iraqi Government possession to Sheikh Ali al-Nida, the late head of the Albu Nasir tribe and governor of [Salaheddin](#), to be buried. He was buried about three kilometers (2 mi) from his two sons in the same cemetery. Saddam's eldest daughter [Raghad Hussein](#), under [asylum](#) in [Jordan](#), had asked that "his body be buried in [Yemen](#) temporarily until Iraq is liberated and it can be reburied in Iraq," a family spokesperson said by telephone. [34] The family also said his body might be buried in [Ramadi](#), citing safety concerns, though there are no plans to do this. [31]

Media coverage

The primary news source for the execution was the state-run Iraqi television news station [Al Iraqiya](#). A scrolling headline read, "Saddam's execution marks the end of a dark period of Iraq's history." The [BBC](#) noted that a doctor, a lawyer, and various officials, were present, and that a video recording of the execution was made.^[10] [Al Arabiya](#) reported that Saddam's lawyer had confirmed Saddam's death. [Al Iraqiya](#) also confirmed his death, whose announcer said, "criminal Saddam was hanged to death ..."^[35]

Major news networks carried official video of the moments leading up to Saddam's execution. The Iraqi government also released pictures of Saddam's dead body in a shroud.

Mobile phone video

While officially released footage of the event stopped short of showing the actual execution,^[10] an amateur video shot using a [camera phone](#) from a staircase leading up to the gallows surfaced, containing low-quality footage of the entire hanging.^[27] The amateur footage, unlike the official footage, included sound; witnesses could be heard taunting Saddam at the gallows.^[36] On January 3, 2007, the Iraqi government arrested the guard who they believe made the mobile phone video.^[37] Iraqi National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubaie later held a press conference where he announced that three arrests had been made in connection with the investigation into the video recording and leak.^[38]

A week later, another video surfaced on the Internet, which showed Saddam's body with a large neck wound, creating speculation that the execution had been carried out incorrectly.

In the scene when the trapdoor was opened, an audible crack sounded indicating his broken neck. After the doctor checked his heartbeat using a stethoscope, he replied none. When this footage was shown in the news, the media coverage decided to cut the scene of the opening of the trapdoor to avoid the violent nature and the rating.

Reaction

Reactions to Saddam's death were varied. Some strongly supported the execution, particularly those personally affected by Saddam's actions as leader. Some of these victims wished to see him brought to trial for his other actions, alleged to have resulted in a much greater number of deaths than those for which he was convicted. Some believed the execution would boost morale in Iraq, while others feared it would incite further violence. Many in the international community supported Saddam being brought to justice, but objected in particular to the use of [capital punishment](#), which is now abolished throughout most of Europe, South America, Canada and Australia. Saddam's supporters condemned the action as unjust.

"The world will know that Saddam Hussein lived honestly, died honestly, and maintained his principles. He did not lie when he declared his trial null," said Saddam's lawyers in a statement.^[9]

A spokeswoman for Saddam's daughters reported, "They felt very proud as they saw their father facing his executioners so bravely."^[39] In [Amman](#), the capital of [Jordan](#), Saddam's eldest daughter, [Raghad Hussein](#), joined protests against

her father's execution. [40] Protesters expressed sentiment that Saddam is a [martyr](#) and that he was the only Arab leader who said no to the United States. [41]

According to reports from an official, there was dancing and [Shi'a](#) chants around Saddam's body after the execution took place. [15] Two days after the execution, the Iraqi government launched an inquiry into the taunting and the way the execution was filmed. [42]

United States' forces braced for a backlash of violence in Iraq due to the execution. [United States President George W. Bush](#) stated that Saddam's death would not end the violence in Iraq. [43] In Tikrit, Iraq, where Saddam was buried, police barred entrances to and departures from the city for four days as a safety precaution. [44]

Iraqi reaction

Politicians

In a statement, [Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki](#) said, "Justice, in the name of the people, has carried out the death sentence against the criminal Saddam, who faced his fate like all tyrants, frightened and terrified during a hard day which he did not expect." [39] He also stated, "Your generous and pure land has got rid—and for ever—of the filth of the dictator and a black page of Iraq's history has been turned and the tyrant has died." [45] He also said that Saddam Hussein does not represent any group or sect of the Iraqi people. [46]

"[Iraqis] have been waiting for justice to be executed, and I think that Iraqis have received the news that they've been waiting for, for too many years," said Iraqi Oil Minister [Hussain al-Shahristani](#). [45]

"The execution of Saddam Hussein is a big crime. Saddam Hussein was a prisoner of war and was arrested by the U.S. forces, and not by the Iraqi government. It is a crime with which they wanted to cover up many things," a [Sunni](#) politician, [Khalaf al-Ulayyan](#) said. [45]

"I don't think it will make much difference because the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that very drastic measures have to be taken to confront the militias and restore law and order," said [Adnan Pachachi](#). "Of course, he has some supporters in Iraq—some of them are armed and they may commit acts of violence and so on—but I don't think it will make much difference, frankly." [45]

The first chief judge who presided over Saddam Hussein's trial, [Rizgar Mohammed Amin](#), has said the execution was illegal, citing the beginning of the Eid al-Adha festival for Iraqi Sunnis, during which executions are banned, and Iraqi law that executions may only be carried out 30 days after the appeal court's decision on the sentencing. The appeals court's December 26, 2006 ruling stated that the sentence was to be carried out within 30 days. [47]

The execution will also prevent trials for other cases, including the chemical weapons attacks on [Halabja](#) in 1988. [48]

The Center of Halabja against Anfalization and Genocide of the Kurds (CHAK) disapproved of the execution, without having Saddam tried for other cases including the massacre of 8,000 [Barzani Kurds](#) in 1983, chemical attacks on [Sardasht](#), the 1988 massacres on [Anfal](#), and other crimes. [49] At the time of his execution, Saddam was on trial,

facing charges of [genocide](#) at Anfal, which resulted in an estimated 180,000 deaths. [50][51] "Of course, Saddam has committed too many crimes. He deserves for those crimes capital punishment. But so quickly done, so quickly executed ... and only in one case—it would leave the other cases and leave a lot of secrets without being known," said an [Iraqi Kurdish](#) politician, Mahmoud Osman. [45]

Populace

Shi'as in Iraq celebrated the execution while Sunni towns saw protests. [9][39] In [Sadr City](#), [Basra](#), and [Najaf](#) citizens danced in the streets and honked their car horns with jubilation. In [Tikrit](#), [Samarra](#), and [Ramadi](#), however, there were reports of protests. [39] David MacDougall, a Fox News reporter located in [Baghdad](#), has stated that there has been what is thought to be celebratory gunfire in Baghdad. However, the BBC's correspondent in Baghdad, [John Simpson](#), indicated there had been no more gunfire than is normally heard on the city's streets. People in Iraq expressed mixed sentiments, with some glad to see the execution carried out. "Now, he is in the garbage of history," said Jawad Abdul-Aziz, a civilian who lost his father, three brothers and 22 cousins because of Saddam. [9]

Ali Hamza, a professor in the [Shi'a](#) town of [Al Diwaniyah](#) said, "Now all the victims' families will be happy because Saddam got his just sentence." [9] Some were content to see Saddam gone, but expressed concerns about the instability in Iraq. Haider Hamed, a 34-year-old candy store owner in Baghdad and a Shi'a who lost his uncle due to Saddam, commented, "He's gone, but our problems continue. We brought problems on ourselves after Saddam because we began fighting Shi'a on Sunni and Sunni on Shi'a." [1]

Other Iraqis expressed outrage and viewed Saddam as a [martyr](#). "The president, the leader Saddam Hussein is a [martyr](#) and God will put him along with other martyrs. Do not be sad nor complain because he has died the death of a holy warrior," said [Sheik](#) Yahya al-Attawi, a [cleric](#) at a [mosque](#). [9] Protests occurred in [Samarra](#), where Sunnis broke into the [Al-Askari Mosque](#), [52] and a riot broke out at Padush prison in [Mosul](#). [42]

World reaction

At the time of Saddam's capture in December 2003, U.S. President [George W. Bush](#) expressed his opinion that Saddam deserved "the ultimate justice," alluding to the death penalty. [53] This put the United States at odds with signatory countries to the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) (Article 3) and other international treaties that prohibit the death penalty and the [extradition](#) of suspects to countries where capital punishment may be carried out. [54]

Opposition

Following the execution of Saddam Hussein, leaders around the world issued statements. Leaders of India, [55] Cambodia, [56] and Sri Lanka, [57] as well as the presidents of [Brazil](#), [58] and [Venezuela](#) expressed opposition to the execution. [59]

Leaders and governments of many European countries also expressed strong disapproval of using capital punishment in this and any case, including Austria, [60] Denmark, [61][62] Finland, [63] Germany, [64] Italy, [45] the

Netherlands,^[65] Norway,^[66] Portugal,^[67] Spain,^[68] Sweden,^[69] and Switzerland^[70] and the United Kingdom.^{[71][72]} The [European Commissioner for Development aid Louis Michel](#) stated that the execution of Saddam

Hussein is against the fundamental principles of the [European Union](#) (EU). The EU is against the death penalty, regardless of the crimes committed. "It is not a big day for democracy," Michel stated to the [RTBF](#). "The EU is in fierce opposition to the death penalty and there is no exception to that fundamental principle. Cruelty is not to be answered with cruelty. I believe that there were other possible means to revenge the cruelties committed by Saddam. The death penalty is not the right answer." He feared that the execution of Saddam will have a negative impact and that the former dictator will emerge as a martyr. "You don't fight barbarism with acts that I deem as barbaric. The death penalty is not compatible with democracy," he told Reuters.^[73] The Reverend Federico Lombardi, of the [Vatican](#), expressed

sadness and disapproval of the death penalty.^[74] Chile,^[75] Belgium,^[76] Russia,^[77] and Serbia^[78] expressed disapproval of capital punishment in this and any case, and also expressed concerns about implications of the execution on stability in Iraq.

[Hosni Mubarak](#), the [President of Egypt](#), called the execution shameful and unthinkable, and stated that the execution turned the ex-president into a martyr. "I am not saying whether Saddam did or did not deserve the death penalty. I am also not getting into the question of whether this court is lawful under occupation. I knew they wanted to administer the sentence before the end of the year, but why on the Muslim holiday? People are executed all over the world, but what happened in Baghdad on the first day of Eid al-Adha was unthinkable. I didn't believe it was happening," he said. "In the end, no one will ever forget the circumstances and the way in which Saddam was executed. They turned him into a martyr, and the problems in Iraq remained."^[79]

[Terry Davis](#), Secretary General of the [Council of Europe](#), an international organization of which almost all European states are members, made an official statement condemning the execution: "The trial of Saddam Hussein was a missed opportunity ... It was an opportunity for Iraq to join the civilised world. The former Iraqi dictator was a ruthless criminal who deserved to be punished, but it was wrong to kill him. Saddam Hussein is no longer paying for his crimes; he is simply dead ... The death penalty is cruel and barbaric, and I call on the Iraqi authorities to abolish it. It is late, but not too late, for Iraq to join the great majority of civilised and democratic countries in the world who have already abolished the death penalty."^[80]

Perhaps one of the most vocal European leaders has been [Romano Prodi](#), the [Prime Minister of Italy](#), who announced that his [government](#) would be campaigning at the UN for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty.^[81] A number of Italian political figures and parties have expressed disgust at the execution, and Prodi plans to use Italy's recent admission as a temporary member of the UN Security Council to campaign the [General Assembly](#) to adopt a moratorium.

In Turkey, the leader of the main opposition [Republican People's Party](#), [Deniz Baykal](#), expressed sorrow over the execution of Saddam Hussein, saying, "It is impossible to understand the rejoicing of those who put pressure on every country, including Turkey, for years to abolish the death sentence."^[82]

The [Palestinian Authority](#) expressed opposition to the execution, and sadness over the demise of their steadfast ally. ^[83] [Hamás](#) called the execution of Saddam a "political assassination." ^[84] Saudi Arabia expressed "surprise and dismay" and regretted the "politicisation" of the trial. ^[85] A "house of condolences" where people can gather to mourn Saddam was opened in [Bethlehem](#). The organizers hung Iraqi flags, pictures of Saddam and broadcast Iraqi revolutionary songs. Palestinians rallied in other cities for the Iraqi leader as well. A Palestinian street and school has been reported to be named after Saddam Hussein, as well as a youth soccer tournament. ^[86]

A [Reuters](#) reporter based in Afghanistan cited a top [Taliban](#) commander saying the death of Saddam Hussein "will boost the morale of Muslims. The jihad in Iraq will be intensified and attacks on invader forces will increase." ^[87] Fauzan Al Anshori, from the Islamic group of [Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia](#), said Bush, too, should stand trial. "Given the crimes blamed on Saddam, it is unfair if George Bush is not also put before an international tribunal," he said. "Saddam was executed for killing 148 people, Iraqi Shi'a Muslims, while Bush is responsible for the killing of about 600,000 Iraqis since the March 2003 invasion." ^[88]

Respect and concerns

Many other governments, including Canada, ^[89] [Indonesia](#), ^[88] [Pakistan](#), ^[90] [Thailand](#), ^[56] and [Greece](#), ^[91] expressed concerns and wishes for stability in Iraq, without passing judgment on whether or not Saddam should have been executed. Respect for the Iraqi judicial process and the judgment in this case was expressed by many other leaders and government officials, including those of [Afghanistan](#), the People's Republic of China, ^[92] [Japan](#), ^[58] the Czech Republic, France, ^[58] [Germany](#), ^[64] [Iceland](#), ^[93] [Ireland](#), ^[94] the United Kingdom, ^[95] [Australia](#), ^[96] and New Zealand. ^[97]

Support

The [Peruvian president](#), [Alan García](#), expressed approval for the execution of Saddam Hussein: "He deserved the maximum sentence in his country" and was "guilty of genocide" for using chemical weapons against other peoples for their religion or their racial origin. However, García questioned the legitimacy of the process against him, saying, "the trial was made in an occupied country. I don't know if he was hanged for his crimes or just by the occupying forces." ^[98] [Israel](#) ^[99] said that Saddam "had brought about his own demise" and [Poland](#) expressed approval of the execution. ^[100] A spokesman for Poland's president said, "justice has been meted out to a criminal who murdered thousands of people in Iraq." ^[100]

In the United States, [President George W. Bush](#) made a statement, "Bringing Saddam Hussein to justice will not end the violence in Iraq, but it is an important milestone on Iraq's course to becoming a democracy that can govern, sustain, and defend itself." ^[43] Celebration in the United States occurred in at least one location in [Dearborn](#), [Michigan](#), at the corner of Warren and Greenfield, a heavily [Shi'a](#) Iraqi-American community. ^[101]

Non-governmental organizations

[Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#): "All sections of Iraqi society, as well as the wider international community, have an interest in ensuring that a death sentence provided for in Iraqi law is only imposed following a trial and appeal process that is, and is legitimately seen as, fair, credible and impartial. That is especially so in a case as exceptional as this one." [45] – High Commissioner Louise Arbour

[Human Rights Watch](#): "Saddam Hussein was responsible for massive [human rights](#) violations, but that can't justify giving him the death penalty, which is a cruel and inhuman punishment." [102] "History will judge the deeply flawed Dujail trial and this execution harshly." [45] – Director Richard Dicker

[Amnesty International USA](#): "The rushed execution of Saddam Hussein is simply wrong. It signifies justice denied for countless victims who endured unspeakable suffering during his regime, and now have been denied their right to see justice served." [58][103] – Executive Director Larry Cox

[International Federation of Human Rights](#): "This death sentence will generate more violence and deepen the cycle of killing for revenge in Iraq. It is primarily a settling of old scores rather than any attempt at a just sentence; the whole process is an affront to the dignity and the rights of victims." [104] – President Sidiki Kaba

Legality

[Human Rights Watch](#) issued a statement that the "execution follows a flawed trial and marks a significant step away from the rule of law in Iraq." [102] [Amnesty International](#) issued a statement that it "opposed the death penalty in all circumstances but it was especially egregious when this ultimate punishment is imposed after an unfair trial." [105] Two days before the execution, the [International Federation of Human Rights](#) released a statement calling Head of State to ensure a moratorium on the death sentence pronounced against Saddam Hussein by hanging." The organization also said Saddam should be treated as a [prisoner of war](#) under the [Geneva Conventions](#). [106] [Juan Cole](#) said that the execution might lead to more sectarian turmoil. "The trial and execution of Saddam were about revenge, not justice. Instead of promoting national reconciliation, this act of revenge helped Saddam portray himself one last time as a symbol of Sunni Arab resistance, and became one more incitement to sectarian warfare," he said. [107]

Lawyers for Saddam called the trial "a flagrant violation of international law" and plan to continue "using all legal paths available locally and internationally until public opinion gets the truth about this political assassination." [108] In a separate statement, Saddam's American defense lawyer called the execution "an unfortunate display of arrogant aggressor's injustice by the United States of America under the leadership of American President George W. Bush. It sets back achievements in international criminal law many decades and sends a clear message to people all over the world that the United States' aggression cannot be stopped by the law. It is truly a sad day for international justice and sad beginning to a new year." [109]

Reactions in media

Since the release of the amateur video footage of the execution, several commentators have criticized the atmosphere of the hanging. [John Simpson](#) of [BBC News](#) stated that the execution "is shown to be an ugly, degrading business, which was more reminiscent of a public hanging in the 18th century than a considered act of 21st century official

justice." ^[110] Toby Dodge, an expert on Iraq, of [Queen Mary, University of London](#) stated that the showing of the execution on television "conforms to a brutal logic that Saddam Hussein used himself" and went further by saying that "this isn't even victor's justice, this is the tawdry work of an insecure government," particularly since Prime Minister [Nouri al-Maliki](#) forced through Saddam's execution just four days after the appeals court upheld his conviction. ^[111] [The Times](#) commented in its online edition that, in the moments immediately preceding the hanging, "the scene had begun to resemble a medieval execution or a wild hanging in [Texas](#)" amid repeated instances of taunts hurled at Saddam that drowned out the lonely voice of an unidentified person calling for calm in the face of the gravity of the situation. ^[112]

Writing in [The Hindu](#) of India, [Siddharth Varadarajan](#) compared the filming and circulation of Saddam's execution video to the picture postcards of American lynchings of African-American men that were popular in the Deep South in the early years of the 20th century. ^[113] John Burns and Marc Santora, writing in [The New York Times](#), described the execution as "a sectarian free-for-all that had the effect, on the video recordings, of making Mr. Hussein, a mass murderer, appear dignified and restrained, and his executioners, representing Shi'ites who were his principal victims, seem like bullying street thugs." ^[114] The Pakistani-born writer Tariq Ali denounced the proceedings, contrasting favorably the trials of Nazi criminals after World War II with the trial of Saddam, "Where Nuremberg was a more dignified application of victor's justice, Saddam's trial has, till now, been the crudest and most grotesque." ^[115]

Perception of the Iraq government

Following the leaking of a [mobile phone](#) footage of Saddam Hussein's execution, along with the detention on January 3, 2007, of a guard under the Justice Ministry headed by a Sunni Iraqi minister [Hashim Abderrahman al-Shibli](#), suspicions have arisen that the ministry may have intended to inflame sectarian tensions. ^[116] In an interview with [La República](#) on January 19, 2007, [Muqtada al-Sadr](#) said that the people who were in the room during execution were "people paid to discredit him" and the purpose of the unofficial video was to "make Muqtad  look like the real enemy of the Sunnis." ^[117]

United States President [George W. Bush](#) mentioned on January 4, 2007 that he wished that the execution "had gone on in a more dignified way." ^[118] Bush later stated, in a January 16, 2007, interview with U.S. television host [Jim Lehrer](#), that Saddam's execution "looked like it was kind of a revenge killing." Bush said he was "disappointed and felt like they fumbled the—particularly the Saddam Hussein—execution. It reinforced doubts in people's minds that the Maliki government and the unity government of Iraq is a serious government. ... And it sent a mixed signal to the American people and the people around the world." ^[119]

See also

- [Capital punishment in Iraq](#)
- [Operation Red Dawn](#)
- [Iraq War](#)

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(FindLaw) Application for Stay of Execution — Filed in U.S. Federal Court on December 29, 2006.

Video of execution:

Before Execution — (Reuters) video footage moments before the execution.

Full Execution — Camera phone footage of hanging, including audio and footage of death. (Non-streaming link)

After Execution - Camera phone footage of deceased Saddam, lying in a coffin.

Interviews with Iraqi People — (Al Jazeera) video footage of Iraqi people's reaction after Saddam's execution.