

# WebMemo



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## Saddam Hussein Adjudged Serial Mass Murder

*James Phillips*

An Iraqi tribunal has convicted former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein of mass murder and sentenced him to death. Bringing Saddam and his henchmen to justice is a welcome milestone on Iraq's grueling path from dictatorship to democracy. Without resolving Saddam's fate, national reconciliation would be a difficult proposition for Iraq's Shia Arabs and Kurds, long persecuted by Saddam's Sunni-dominated regime.

Saddam's trial also is an important step towards establishing the rule of law in Iraq. And it is a historic event for the broader Middle East. As one Iraqi blogger noted, "For the first time in our region tyrants are being punished for their crimes through a court of law."<sup>1</sup>

Saddam's trial stands out as an exemplary model of fairness compared to the arbitrary "justice" meted out by his own regime and other governments in the Middle East.

Saddam's trial was not an example of "victor's justice" imposed by foreign powers but a judicial proceeding designed and carried out by Iraqis, who were the chief victims of his brutal rule. Nor was it a kangaroo court or show trial. The Iraqi judicial authorities labored to give the toppled tyrant a fair hearing. It was Saddam who sought to put on a show, spewing vitriolic rhetoric to score points with his diehard followers and help ignite a wider insurgency.

Saddam was found guilty of ordering the 1982 murders of 148 Iraqis from the predominantly Shiite village of Dujail after a failed assassination

attempt against him. He will be hanged, along with his half-brother Barzan Ibrahim, then the leader of Iraq's feared Mukhabarat intelligence agency, and Awad Hamed al-Bandar, head of Iraq's Revolutionary Court, which issued the death sentences against the Dujail villagers. A local Baath Party officer was acquitted for lack of evidence, and four others received prison sentences in the highly publicized trial.

An Iraqi appeals panel has unlimited time to review the case. But if the verdicts are upheld and confirmed by Iraq's presidential council, the convicted men must be executed within thirty days. Meanwhile, Saddam is standing trial in another case related to the 1988 "al-Anfal" (the spoils) campaign against Iraqi Kurds, who opposed his brutal regime. Approximately 4,000 villages were destroyed and 180,000 Kurds liquidated in a series of mass murders designed to break down all resistance to his dictatorship.

Saddam did not calmly accept his verdict. He screamed at the presiding judge, "Go to hell, you and the court!" and cynically chanted, "Allahu Akbar," (God is great) to pander to radical Muslims viewing the televised proceedings. Yet this

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[www.heritage.org/research/MiddleEast/wm1247.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/MiddleEast/wm1247.cfm)

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serial mass murderer killed over half a million of his own countrymen (by conservative estimates) during his reign of terror and several hundred thousand more Iranians and Kuwaitis while invading his neighbors. This makes him responsible for the deaths of more Muslims than any single leader since the Mongol hordes invaded the Middle East in the 13th century.

Saddam's legacy persists in Iraq's bloody insurgency, which is dominated by a loose alliance of his Baathist followers, Sunni Arab tribes, and Islamic

radicals. Bringing Saddam to justice was an important accomplishment of the American intervention in Iraq. But to safeguard Iraq's future, the United States must help Iraq's elected government to defeat the insurgents that continue to murder innocent Iraqis and American troops in Saddam's name.

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1. [http://pajamasmedia.com/2006/11/the\\_day\\_of\\_justice.php](http://pajamasmedia.com/2006/11/the_day_of_justice.php)