

NEWS RELEASE

*Iraqi Ministry
of Justice*

Contact: Thomas J. Basile
1-914-822-7597

REAPPOINTMENT OF EIGHT IRAQI JUSTICES SHOWS COMMITMENT TO INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY

Had Been Wrongfully Removed by Saddam Hussein

Baghdad, Iraq...August 11, 2003— Ceremonies at the Iraqi Ministry of Justice today officially reappointed eight Supreme Court Justices wrongfully removed, in 1993 by the regime of Saddam Hussein. This action demonstrates that the rule of law and an independent judiciary are cornerstones of a free Iraq.

The justices were removed after failing to bow to pressure by Saddam Hussein to uphold the death penalty ruling of a lower court in a case involving a man accused of murdering an associate of Qusay Hussein. Nine justices at the time found that the killing lacked the element of premeditation required for the death penalty and voted to instruct the lower court to investigate the matter.

For this exercise of judicial independence Saddam Hussein had them removed from the court and denied them retirement benefits.

The eight justices petitioned the Judicial Review Committee for reinstatement at the end of July, 2003. The Committee, composed of two Iraqi and two Coalition members issued an Order of Reinstatement stating that, “the facts overwhelmingly support the conclusion that these judges were improperly removed from office.”

The Judicial Review Committee was created by the Coalition Provisional Authority to review prosecutors and judges for suitability to continue in office and investigate cases of those who claim they were wrongfully removed.

“These justices deserve to be honored,” stated Medhat Mahmood, Officer in Charge of the Iraqi Ministry of Justice. “Their removal was wrongful and a severe interference with the independence of the judiciary.”

One newly reinstated justice stated, “I lost my position, my career and my retirement rights. But at least I could sleep at night. I had my conscience and I never regretted my decision.” In addition to retaking their places on the bench, the justices’ access to retirement benefits will be restored and each may receive some back pay.

“This is evidence of change,” stated Mr. Mahmood. “With this action we are reassuring the Iraqi people that we are committed to building a strong, just and independent judiciary.”

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