

Ban declines to condemn Saddam's execution

AFP, United Nations

The new UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon declined on Tuesday to condemn or defend the execution of Saddam Hussein, saying it was for each country to decide its position on the death penalty.

"Saddam Hussein was responsible for committing heinous crimes and unspeakable atrocities against the Iraqi people," Ban told reporters at UN headquarters in New York.

"We should never forget the victims of his crimes. The issue of capital punishment is for each and every member state to decide," said Ban after arriving for his first day of work as head of the world body.

But he said he hoped governments "pay due regard to all aspects of international humanitarian laws."

Ban's comments seemed to contradict the United Nations' international opposition to capital punishment, which was cited Saturday by the UN envoy to Iraq, Ashraf Qazi.

After Saddam was hanged, Qazi said in a statement that the United Nations understood "the desire for justice felt by many Iraqis."

But he added: "Based on the principle of respect for the right to life, however, the United Nations remains opposed to capital punishment, even in the case of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide."

Former Saddam trial judge says execution violates law

AFP, Sulaimaniyah

The first chief judge who presided over Saddam Hussein's trial for crimes against humanity said on Monday that the late dictator's execution by the Iraqi government was illegal.

Rizkar Mohammed Amin, who later resigned as the trial's chief judge, said Iraqi law banned executions during the Eid al-Adha festival period that marks the end of the annual Hajj pilgrimage.

The four-day Feast of the Sacrifice began for Iraqi Sunnis on Saturday -- the day Saddam was hanged in Baghdad -- and on Sunday for Shiites.

Amin also claimed that Iraqi law stipulates an execution must be carried out 30 days after the appeal court's decision on the sentencing, which in this case upheld the death sentence of Saddam.

But in ratifying the death sentence on December 26, the appeals chamber insisted that the law stipulated the sentence be implemented within 30 days.

Amin resigned as chief judge of the Dujail trial following political pressure amid accusations that he was lenient with Saddam and occasionally allowed the late dictator to carry out outbursts in court.

Saddam was hanged on Saturday in a Shiite district of Baghdad after he was found guilty of executing 148 Shiite villagers from Dujail in the 1980s where he escaped an assassination bid.

He was buried on Sunday in his home village of Ajwa.

Iraq's National Security Adviser Mowaffaq al-Rubaie denied that Saddam was executed on Eid al-Adha, in an interview with CNN just hours after the hanging.

"Eid starts from daylight -- we had managed to execute him well before the sunrise," Rubaie said.

Powerful Iraqi Sunni tribal chief killed

AFP, Baghdad

A 75-year-old chief from Iraq's powerful Tamin tribe was thrown to his death from the top of a Baghdad building after gunmen kidnapped him from a funeral, a relative said yesterday.

Sheikh Hamed Mohammed Suhail, a Sunni leader in a mixed Sunni and Shiite tribe, was seized from the funeral in Agaruff area near Abu Ghraib on the western outskirts of Baghdad two days ago.

"He was dragged from the funeral and taken to Shuala area in Baghdad and then thrown from the top of a building," his nephew, tribal leader Sheikh Ali Suhail al-Tamimi, told AFP, blaming Shiite militants.

Shuala is a Shiite neighbourhood in western Baghdad.

Although Mohammed Suhail is a Sunni, nearly two thirds of his tribe is Shiite and he was known as a moderate who was working to reconcile Baghdad's warring communities, his nephew said.

"We accuse the Mahdi Army of killing him in this ugly way," Suhail said, pointing the finger at radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's militia, which has been accused of killing Sunnis in Iraq's sectarian conflict.

Baghdad to hang two Saddam aides today

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq will execute two former henchmen of Saddam Hussein today, five days after the former dictator was himself hanged in Baghdad, an official at the Iraqi prime minister's office said yesterday.

Saddam's half-brother and former head of intelligence, Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti, and Awad Ahmed al-Bandar, the former chief judge of revolutionary court, will be hanged at dawn on Thursday, the official said.

"Their documents have been signed and they will be executed Thursday," he told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity, adding that the pair remains for the time being in the custody of US authorities.

On November 5, the two were found guilty along with Saddam by an Iraqi court of ordering the massacre of 148 Shites from Dujail village in the 1980s in revenge for a failed attempt on the then president's life.

Saddam was hanged on December 30 at a former torture centre in Baghdad's Shiite district of Kadhimiyah and buried a day later at his home village of Ajwa in northern Iraq.

Barzan and Bandar were to have been hanged along with Saddam, but their execution was later postponed as "we did not have time on that day," the official in Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's office said.



PHOTO: AFP

Saddam's half-brother and former head of intelligence, Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti (R), and Awad Ahmed al-Bandar, the former chief judge of revolutionary court, will be hanged at dawn today.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone, which has enraged Sunnis across Iraq and offended international leaders.

"He's very serious about this inquiry, and he wants to punish whoever is responsible," said a Shiite lawmaker with close links to the prime minister.

The Iraqi government wanted to complete Saddam's execution before sunrise, which marked the start of Eid al-Adha, one of Islam's holiest holidays and traditionally a time for forgiveness. The festival ends on Wednesday.

Hot-tempered and secretive, Barzan was one of Saddam's most trusted aides, while Bandar was the first judge to be tried for ordering executions since Nazi judges were brought before the Nuremberg trials after World War II.

Saddam's execution, meanwhile, has dramatically increased tension between Iraq's already feuding Sunnis and Shiites communities, especially after a grisly video showing the Sunni leader taunted by Shiite hangmen surfaced.

On Tuesday, Maliki launched an inquiry into the source of the grainy

yet graphic video, apparently taken with a mobile phone,