

Muslims fear violence after death of Saddam

Heather Polischuk, The Leader-Post

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A Saskatchewan-based Muslim organization is concerned the execution of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein may lead to more unrest in the already war-torn country.

Zeba Hashmi, general secretary for Muslims for Peace and Justice, said there is a concern that "this would be taken as an action that was taken while Iraq was occupied under the United States. And of course there are people with different alliances there, and you kind of worry about that, how those people would feel and what kind of interaction would happen in the future between the loyalists to Saddam Hussein and those against him."

Hashmi admitted that since there are few Iraqis in Regina, the local Muslim community in general is not paying any more attention than anyone else to the talk about Saddam's execution.

"From the Muslim community, the general feeling is probably I would say a non-feeling," she said. "It's not something that's really being discussed. We do have some Kurdish people in the community and from their point of view, they would probably be relieved that this is happening."

"I think our opinion as a whole would be that as long as the Iraqi people have chosen this and are happy with this, it's up to the Iraqi people what happens to Saddam Hussein. I guess our worries lie in the fact that since Iraq is occupied at the moment, what kind of unrest would this cause? Would this be better for the country or not, in the long term, in terms of unrest and the state of the country?"

While Hashmi said there is some concern Saddam loyalists may buy into the former leader's claims of possible martyrdom, she does not believe those statements will bear much weight with most people.

"When I read that statement, I just see Saddam consoling himself," she said. "That's basically what he has to hang on (to) at this moment. That's a way perhaps of rallying those loyal to him. I don't see much merit to that."

Speaking personally, Hashmi said that if Saddam's execution is found to be the way to justice, then it should go ahead.

"Of course what is just should happen and I guess if this is what's due to him in light of what he has done, then so be it," she said.