

Iraq to Put Hussein on Trial in 6 Weeks

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BAGHDAD, [Iraq](#), Sept. 4 - The trial of Saddam Hussein will begin in six weeks, the Iraqi government said today, and he and seven aides face a special tribunal on charges of massacring almost 150 residents from the town of Dujail, the scene of a failed assassination attempt against Mr. Hussein 23 years ago.

Laith Kubba, a spokesman for the Iraqi prime minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, said the trial would begin Oct. 19 - four days after a national vote on a proposed new constitution. Mr. Hussein, who faces the death penalty if convicted, could possibly be hanged within months. Four days ago Iraq carried out its first court-ordered executions since the fall of Mr. Hussein's government, hanging three people convicted in May in the southern city of Kut of rapes and killings.

Great efforts will be made to "ensure the transparency of the trial" of Mr. Hussein, Mr. Kubba said at a news conference. "We should view this trial as a national event and not just as a trial for Saddam on the killings he committed."

Mr. Kubba said that Mr. Hussein would be tried with seven associates, including Barzan Ibrahim, a half-brother of Mr. Hussein and a former top official of the Mukhabarat secret police, and Taha Yassin, who was vice chairman of the Baath Party's Revolutionary Command Council. The charges stem from the killing of 143 people and the imprisonment of hundreds of families after the assassination attempt in Dujail on July 8, 1982, he said.

Following the failed attack on Mr. Hussein, Iraqi courts ordered the execution of men and boys from Dujail, a largely Shiite town 35 miles north of Baghdad. Investigators for the special tribunal that will try Mr. Hussein have said another 1,500 Dujail residents were later ordered incarcerated in a prison in a desolate stretch of desert near the Saudi Arabian border.

One of the lawyers for Mr. Hussein's family contended today that a trial so soon would give too little time to prepare an adequate defense, and he said he doubted the trial would start by Oct. 19. In an interview with The Associated Press, the lawyer, Abdel Haq Alani, said the trial date was the "wish of the ruling group in the Green Zone, but certainly not the court" - an allusion to the Iraqi government leaders who live in the heavily-fortified compound in central Baghdad.

"We haven't been served an official notice about the date of trial," Mr. Alani told the A.P. "It was only a statement made by an Iraqi government official to the media, which absolutely has no value in the law."