

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 30/01

Fear of Imminent Execution

23 May 2001

QATAR

Shaikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Hamad al-Thani
18 others

Nineteen people sentenced to life imprisonment for their part in a failed coup attempt are now facing imminent execution, after the appeal court increased their sentences to the death penalty on 21 May. The court's verdict is final, and the executions can be carried out at any time if they are approved by the ruler of Qatar, the Amir.

They were among at least 33 people sentenced to life imprisonment in February 2000 for their involvement in a 1996 coup attempt. Among them is Shaikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Hamad al-Thani, a cousin of the Amir and a former finance minister. Nine of those convicted had been tried *in absentia*, and 85 others were acquitted. Both the defence and the prosecution appealed against these sentences.

Amnesty International has previously expressed concern that many of the defendants in this trial were allegedly tortured to force them to confess. No investigation into these allegations is known to have taken place.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Until last year, when three people were put to death, there had been no executions in Qatar for 10 years. Amnesty International is concerned to see Qatar resume its use of the death penalty at a time when other states are considering more humane alternatives to this brutalising and irrevocable punishment.

Amnesty International acknowledges the right and responsibility of all governments to bring to justice those guilty of recognizably criminal offences. However, the organization is fundamentally opposed to the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate violation of the right to life, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English or your own language:

- urging the Amir to commute the death sentences imposed on 19 people for their involvement in the failed coup attempt, and to consider a more humane form of punishment if they have been found guilty after a fair trial in accordance with minimum international standards for fair trial.

APPEALS TO:

His Highness Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani
Amir of the State of Qatar
PO Box 923
Doha, Qatar

Telegrams: Amir, Doha, Qatar

Fax: + 974 36 12 12

Salutation: Your Highness

COPIES TO:

His Highness Shaikh Abdullah bin Khalifa Al-Thani
Prime Minister and Minister of Interior

2

PO Box 115
Doha, Qatar

Fax: + 974 32 71 77

His Excellency Hassan bin Abdullah Al-Ghanem
Minister of Justice
PO Box 917

Doha, Qatar

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and to diplomatic representatives of Qatar accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 June 2001.