

PUBLIC

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Death Penalty

SAUDI ARABIA

Muhammad Basheer al-Ramaly (m), aged 22

A court in the northern city of Hail has sentenced a man to death by beheading. He is in imminent danger of execution.

Muhammad Basheer al-Ramaly was convicted by the General Court in Hail of the kidnapping and rape of four people which took place in February 2009. His sentence is now before the Court of Cassation for review. If approved, it will then go to the Supreme Judicial Council for ratification by the King.

Very little is known about Muhammad Basheer al-Ramaly's trial, but death sentences are invariably imposed and carried out after unfair trials carried out in secret. He did not have access to a lawyer during his trial, and there are reports that he may be suffering from a psychological disorder. He is held in Hail prison.

Muhammad Basheer al-Ramaly has been reported to have been sentenced to crucifixion of his body, in addition to the death sentence. Crucifixions in Saudi Arabia take place after the beheading; the body along with the separated head are placed on a pole in a public square to act as a deterrent.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At least 158 people were executed in 2007, and at least 102 in 2008. Since the beginning of 2009, a further 44 people are known to have been executed.

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offences, including some with no lethal consequences. Court proceedings fall far short of international standards for fair trial. Defendants are rarely allowed formal representation by a lawyer, and in many cases are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. They may be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress or deception.

For further information please see *Saudi Arabia: Affront to Justice: Death Penalty in Saudi Arabia* (Index: MDE 23/027/2008), 14 October 2008: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/saudi-arabia-executions-target-foreign-nationals-20081014>

Saudi Arabia's latest execution and crucifixion of the body took place on 29 May 2009. See Amnesty International web feature: *Man beheaded and crucified in Saudi Arabia*, published on 1 June 2009, at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/man-beheaded-and-crucified-saudi-arabia-20090601>

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic or English or your own language:

- urging the King to halt the execution of Muhammad Basheer al-Ramaly;
- calling on him to commute Muhammad Basheer al-Ramaly's death sentence, and those of all others under sentence of death in Saudi Arabia, as a matter of urgency, with a view to abolishing the death penalty;

- reminding the authorities that they should act in accordance with international standards for fair trial, including the UN Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, which state that capital punishment may only be imposed after a fair trial in which the defendant is provided with "adequate legal assistance at all stages of the proceedings";
- expressing concern that Muhammad Basheer al-Ramaly is reported to be suffering from a psychological disorder and that, if this is so, the death penalty would be in defiance of UN Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2004/67, which urges states that still maintain the death penalty "Not to impose the death penalty on a person suffering from any form of mental disorder or to execute any such person".

APPEALS TO:

His Majesty King 'Abdullah Bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud

The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques

Office of His Majesty the King

Royal Court

Riyadh

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior) +966 1 403 1185 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Majesty

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud

Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior

Ministry of the Interior

P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road

Riyadh 11134

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: **+966 1 403 1185 (please keep trying)**

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

COPIES TO:

Mr Bandar Mohammed Abdullah Al Aiban

President, Human Rights Commission

P.O. Box 58889

King Fahad Road, Building No. 373

Riyadh 11515

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: **+966 1 461 2061**

Email: **hrc@haq-ksa.org**

and to diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 August 2009.