

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE

23/46/00

APPEAL CASE

Amnesty International
International Secretariat

1 Easton Street

London WC1X 0DW

United Kingdom

June 2000

Saudi Arabia - End Secrecy, End Suffering

Torture concern / Risk of flogging

[NAME RETRACTED], Indian national

Saji Varghese, Indian national

Jameel Basheer Fatwi, Eritrean national

On 28 March 2000 Amnesty International began a worldwide action protesting against human rights violations in Saudi Arabia, including the widespread use of torture in police stations and prisons and the judicial punishment of flogging. The cases of [NAME RETRACTED] and Saji Varghese, both Indian nationals, and that of Jameel Basheer Fatwi, Eritrean national, are among the cases of torture victims which Amnesty International is calling on the Saudi Arabian Government to investigate. The Saudi Arabian Government has ratified the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and is obliged to respect its provisions regarding any person living in its territory.

Case 1

[NAME RETRACTED] was arrested in Dammam on 21 July 1999, reportedly for stealing a briefcase containing money from the office where he worked. He was interrogated and allegedly subjected to severe beatings at Dammam Police Station. While being tortured he was reportedly handcuffed and shackled. According to information received by Amnesty International his torture stopped only after he confessed to taking the briefcase and giving it to his colleague Saji Varghese. Though [NAME RETRACTED] has no knowledge of Arabic and the police officer was not fluent in English, he was said to have been interrogated and made to sign a confession written in Arabic without a translator being present. Following this confession Saji Varghese was also arrested. He too was allegedly tortured during interrogation.

According to information received by Amnesty International, when the two appeared before the court they pleaded not guilty. [NAME RETRACTED] apparently told the judge that he had confessed only to stop the torture, showing him the marks left on his body. Despite this they were both convicted for theft in December 1999 after an unfair trial without any legal representation. [NAME

RETRCATED] was sentenced to 240 lashes and one year's imprisonment and Saji Varghese was sentenced to 200 lashes and eight month's imprisonment. [NAME RETRACTED] reportedly received his lashes in early 2000. It is not known whether Saji Varghese has received any lashes. They are both held in Dammam prison. [NAME RETRACTED] is reported to suffer from "an ulcer", and Saji Varghese is diabetic.

Case 2

Jameel Basheer Fatwi, an Eritrean national who worked as a businessman in Saudi Arabia since 1990, was arrested in Riyadh on 20 March 1995. He was accused of theft, fraud and involvement in organised prostitution. At first he denied the charges against him and was allegedly tortured during interrogation at Al-Khobar Police Station. His torture methods as reported to Amnesty International included electric shocks, beatings and sleep and food deprivation. Following this torture he reportedly signed a confession. Subsequently he was brought before a court. Amnesty International does not know the exact outcome of the trial but he is said to have been sentenced to 1100 lashes (subsequently reduced to 550 lashes) and five and a half year's imprisonment on the sole basis of his forced confession. He is currently held in Al-Khobar Prison. He is said to suffer from diabetes. To Amnesty International's knowledge 500 of the lashes have already been administered.

Recommended Action

** Write to the Saudi Arabian authorities (copying any letters to the Saudi Arabian Embassy in your country):*

- asking for independent and impartial investigation into the reports of torture of the three prisoners and for the findings of such investigation to be made public and anyone found responsible to be brought to justice, in accordance with Saudi Arabia's obligations under the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

- urging commutation of the flogging sentence for Saji Varghese;

- seeking assurances that the three detainees are being humanely treated and are granted regular access to lawyers and family;

- seeking assurances that they are granted regular access to medical attention, particularly due to their condition of ill-health.

Addresses

Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Commander of the National Guard

His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdullah bin 'Abdul 'Aziz al-Saud
Royal Court, Riyadh
Telegram: Crown Prince 'Abdullah, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr. 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Ministry of Justice
University Street, Riyadh, 11137
Fax: (1) 401 1741
Telegram: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Ministry of the Interior
P.O. Box 2933
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Fax: (1) 403 1185
Telegram Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

*** Ask your own government officials to raise the cases of [NAME RETRACTED], Saji Varghese and Jameel Basheer Fatwi in any meetings or other communications they may have with the Saudi Arabian authorities.**

*** Please also try to gain as much publicity as possible regarding their cases (particularly media coverage), focussing on the use of torture to make them confess and the sentences of flogging.**

For more information contact Amnesty International in your own country or write to:

Amnesty International

International Secretariat

1 Easton Street

London

WC1X 0DW

United Kingdom

You can also visit our web-site: www.amnesty.org