

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 11/20/96

UA 161/96

Death penalty / Legal concern

1 July 1996

BAHRAIN'Ali Ahmad Abed al-Usfur, aged 31, employee in the agriculture ministry
Yusef Hussein 'Abdelbaki, aged 31, teacher
Ahmad Khalil Ibrahim Habil al-Kattan, aged 30, employee in aluminium company

Amnesty International is dismayed at reports that the three men named above were sentenced to death by Bahrain's State Security Court on 1 July 1996, after being convicted of carrying out a firebomb attack on an Asian restaurant on 14 March 1996, in which seven Bangladeshis were killed. Amnesty International fears that the three are at imminent risk of execution.

The three are among a group of eight men who were arrested on the day of the attack. The trial began in May 1996, and, on 16 June, the court announced that the verdict had been set for 1 July. In addition to the three death sentences, four of the men were sentenced to life imprisonment, and another was sentenced to 15 years.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life, and the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Amnesty International is also concerned that the trial, *in camera*, of the eight men did not meet internationally-recognized standards for fair trial. The State Security Court does not allow for appeals, and proceeds to a decision at a faster pace than other courts. The State Security Court frequently dismisses testimonies by defence witnesses, relying mainly on statements the defendant made during the investigation. The organization fears that the defendants may have been convicted on the basis of confessions extracted under torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 26 March 1996, the authorities carried out the first execution in Bahrain for nearly 20 years when Issa Ahmad Hassan Qambar was executed by firing squad. He had been convicted of murdering a police sergeant (see UA 162/95, MDE 11/13/95, 6 July 1995 and updates).

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

- expressing sympathy for the victims of crime and their families, and acknowledging the right of governments to bring those responsible for criminal acts to justice;
- stating unconditional opposition to the death penalty as a violation of the right to life as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, pointing out that it is brutalizing to all involved in its application, and that there is no evidence that it deters crime more effectively than other punishments;
- expressing regret at the death sentence passed on 'Ali Ahmad Abed al-Usfur, Yusef Hussein Abdelbaki and Ahmad Khalil Ibrahim al-Kattan and urging that the sentences be commuted;
- expressing concern that their trial did not meet internationally-recognized standards for fair trial, and that the convictions may have been based on confessions extracted under torture.

APPEALS TO:

His Highness
Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman Al Khalifa
Office of His Highness the Amir
PO Box 555
The Amiri Court
Rifa'a Palace, Bahrain
Telexes: 8666 Qasar BN; 8500 Qasar BN
Telegrams: His Highness the Amir, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +973 668884
Salutation: Your Highness

His Excellency
Shaikh Muhammad Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa
Minister of Interior
PO Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Telexes: 9572 PSMKT BN or 7889 PMPO BN
Telegrams: Minister of Interior, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +973 276765 or 2905526
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister
PO Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Telexes: 9336 PROM BN or 7889 PMPO BN
Telegrams: Prime Minister, al-Manama, Bahrain
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Bahrain accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 August 1996.