

EXTERNAL

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Death Penalty

4 February 1997

EGYPT Abu al-Ma'aty Salah Nasr al-Din
Nabiha al-Sayyid 'Ali

Abu al-Ma'aty Salah Nasr al-Din, unemployed, and his wife Nabiha al-Sayyid 'Ali have recently been sentenced to death by the Giza criminal court after being found guilty of murder. Their sentences have now been ratified by the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in the country.

The Court of Cassation has reviewed the death sentences handed down on the two individuals. It upheld the verdict against Abu al-Ma'aty Salah Nasr al-Din, but postponed the verdict regarding his wife's sentence until 22 February. Once death sentences have been confirmed, executions can be carried out within a matter of weeks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is applied in Egypt for criminal offences such as drug use or trafficking and murder. Dozens of people have been sentenced to death in Egypt for such crimes in the last few years. It is also applied for offences related to "terrorism". The death penalty has been increasingly used in such cases since President Hosni Mubarak began issuing special decrees referring civilians to be tried by military courts in October 1992: 74 death sentences have been passed by military courts since then and 54 executions have been carried out.

Death sentences in criminal cases are submitted to the *Mufti* for approval. This is a routine measure, as he approves the vast majority of them. They are then passed on to the President or his nominee for ratification. Final verdicts by criminal courts can be appealed against before the Court of Cassation only when it can be proved that there were procedural irregularities in the trial. The death sentences issued by military courts are subject to ratification by the President of the Republic, and then review by the Military Appeals Bureau, also headed by the President of the Republic.

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

- expressing concern that Abu al-Ma'aty Salah Nasr al-Din and Nabiha al-Sayyid 'Ali have been sentenced to death and that their sentences have been ratified by the *Mufti*;
- urging the President to commute these and all other pending death sentences;
- acknowledging the seriousness of the crimes for which the two people were convicted, but explaining your opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life;
- expressing concern at the upsurge in the use of the death penalty in Egypt, and drawing attention to world trends to abolish or reduce the use of the death penalty, in accordance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a state party.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt

Telegrams: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt

Telexes: 93794 WAZRA UN
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Ms Nayla Gabr
The Human Rights Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: (20 2) 574 9667
E-mail: mofal@idsc.gov.eg

Dr Fathi Sorour
Speaker
The People's Assembly
Magles al-Sha'ab Street, Cairo, Egypt

and to diplomatic representatives of Egypt accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 March 1997.