

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 12/11/96

UA 110/96

Death penalty

23 April 1996

EGYPT 'Awda Mohammad Hassan, aged 20
'Abdu 'Atiya Sulayman
Medhat Fou'ad Ahmad
Mohammad Isma'il Makawy

The four people mentioned above have been sentenced to death in Egypt in three separate cases over the past two weeks.

On 13 April, a Cairo criminal court sentenced 'Awda Mohammad Hassan to death for drug trafficking. 'Abdu 'Atiya Sulayman and Medhat Fou'ad Ahmad were sentenced to death on 14 April by the Giza criminal court, after being convicted of murder. In the third case, Mohammad Isma'il Makawy was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death on 17 April by the Alexandria criminal court.

This brings the number of people sentenced to death in Egypt in 1996, as recorded by Amnesty International, to 25. Four people, sentenced to death in previous years, have been executed so far during the year.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is applied in Egypt for criminal offences such as murder and drug use or trafficking. Dozens of people have been sentenced to death in Egypt for such crimes. It is also applied for offences related to "terrorism". The death penalty has been increasingly applied in such cases since October 1992, when President Hosni Mubarak began issuing special decrees referring civilians to be tried by military courts: 70 death sentences have been passed by military courts since that date and 48 executions have now been carried out.

Death sentences in criminal cases are submitted to the Mufti, the highest religious authority in the country, 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. 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/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English, French, or your own language:

- expressing concern that 'Awda Mohammad Hassan, 'Abdu 'Atiya Sulayman, Medhat Fou'ad Ahmad and Mohammad Isma'il Makawy have been sentenced to death;
- urging that the President use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute these and other pending death sentences;
- expressing concern at the upsurge in the use of the death penalty in Egypt, and voicing opposition to the death penalty as a violation of the right to life and the most extreme form of cruel and inhuman punishment;

if possible, also:

- point out that you do not in any way condone the crimes such as those of which the four people above were convicted, and that you recognize the right of states to bring criminals to justice. However, stress that there is no evidence that the death penalty is an effective deterrent to such crimes;
- draw 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 TO:

Ms Nayla Gabr
The Human Rights Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: (20 2) 574 7839

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 10 June 1996.