

UA 81/98

Death Penalty

12 March 1998

EGYPT

'Aida Nour al-Din Mohammad Abu-Zeid, nurse, aged 25 (F)

'Aida Nour al-Din Mohammad Abu-Zeid was sentenced to death on 11 March 1998 by the Alexandria criminal court after being found guilty of allegedly killing one patient and attempting to kill others.

Her sentence has now been passed to the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in the country, for approval. She may be at imminent risk of execution if the sentence is upheld.

Death sentences issued by criminal and (Emergency) Supreme State Security courts are submitted to the *Mufti* for approval as a routine measure, who usually approves the vast majority of them. They are subsequently passed on to the President of the Republic or his nominee for ratification.

Final verdicts by criminal courts can be appealed against before the Court of Cassation, but only when it can be proved that there were procedural irregularities in the trial.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is applied in Egypt for criminal offences such as drug use or trafficking and murder, and for offences related to "terrorism". It has been used extensively in the country in recent years. In 1997 alone Amnesty International recorded 55 death sentences passed by military, criminal and (Emergency) Supreme State Security courts, and 24 executions.

So far in 1998, the organization has recorded that 11 people, among them three women, have received death sentences. Ten executions have been carried out, including a 38-year-old woman, Hakima Abu al-Ma'ati Ahmad, who was executed on 19 February 1998 after having been found guilty of murdering her husband.

Since October 1992, when President Hosni Mubarak began issuing special decrees referring civilians for trial by military courts, 85 death sentences have been passed by such courts and 62 executions have been carried out. 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:

- acknowledging the seriousness of the crime for which 'Aida Nour al-Din Mohammad Abu-Zeid was convicted, but explaining your opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life, pointing out that it has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect, and is brutalizing to all involved in its application;
- urging the President to use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute this and all other pending death sentences;
- 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**

**Faxes: + 202 390 1998**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

Ms Nayla Gabr  
The Human Rights Department  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt  
**Faxes: + 202 574 9533**

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 28 April 1998.