

PUBLIC

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UA 87/08      Death penalty

KUWAIT      **May Membriri Vecina (f), aged 28, Filipina national**

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The death sentence of May Membriri Vecina, a Filipina domestic worker, was upheld by Kuwait's Court of Cassation on 1 April. The sentence will now be submitted to Kuwait's head of state, the Amir, Sheikh Sabah al-Jaber al-Sabah, for ratification. May Membriri Vecina could be executed in less than a month's time.

May Membriri Vecina was convicted for the murder, on 6 January 2007, of the youngest child of her employer. According to media reports, she had an argument with her employer prior to the allegedly fatal attack. She also attempted to kill his other children but they fled to safety.

May Membriri Vecina, a mother of two children, tried to escape by jumping from the second floor of her employers' house. According to a report from the Associated Press agency, her Kuwaiti lawyer said her employer's wife had been insulting her in front of others just prior to the attack.

May Membriri Vecina's lawyer stated that his client was "temporarily insane" at the time of the attack. It is not known to Amnesty International whether May Membriri Vecina underwent any psychological assessment before her trial.

May Membriri Vecina was sentenced to death by the Criminal Court on 24 July 2007 and her sentence was upheld by the Appeal Court on 26 September 2007.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Foreign migrant workers, who make up a large proportion of Kuwait's work force, suffer a wide range of abuses. Women employed as domestic workers are discriminated against both because they are women and because domestic workers continue to be excluded from the protections afforded to other expatriate workers under the 1964 labour law. Women domestic workers commonly work excessive hours for little pay and have alleged that they are subject to physical and other abuse, including sexual abuse, at the hands of their employers, for which, in practice, they often have no remedy.

Under 2006 Kuwaiti legislation, domestic workers are contracted to a single sponsor, or employer, from whom no transfer is permitted, even if the sponsor is physically abusive or treats them unfairly, such as by withholding pay. A November 2007 Human Rights Watch report on Sri Lankan domestic workers in the Gulf found they faced a range of ill-treatment and a catalogue of obstacles preventing them from seeking redress for such abuse.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic, English or your own language:**

- respectfully urging the Amir not to ratify the death sentence imposed on May Membriri Vecina;
- acknowledging that governments have the right and responsibility to bring those who commit violent crimes to justice, but expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty as the ultimate violation of the right to life;
- calling on the authorities to commute all outstanding death sentences in Kuwait;

- reminding the authorities of the growing international trend towards abolition of the death penalty, and urging them to establish a moratorium on executions as a first step towards complete abolition, in accordance with the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee.

**APPEALS TO:**

Head of state

His Highness Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al- Sabah  
Amir of the State of Kuwait  
al-Diwan al-Amiri, al-Safat, Kuwait

**Fax:** +965 539 2163, or +965 2430559

**Email:** [amirsoffice@da.gov.kw](mailto:amirsoffice@da.gov.kw)

**Salutation:** Your Highness

Prime Minister

His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmad al-Sabah  
Prime Minister

Council of Ministers General Secretariat  
P .O. Box 1397, al-Safat 13014, Kuwait

**Fax:** +965 246 6334

**Salutation:** Your Highness

Minister of the Interior

His Excellency Jaber Khalid Al-Jaber Al-Sabah  
Ministry of the Interior  
P.O.Box 12500, Shamiya 71655, Kuwait

**Fax:** +965 243 6570

**Email:** [comment@moi.gov.kw](mailto:comment@moi.gov.kw)

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Jamal Ahmad Al-Shihab  
Ministry of Justice

P.O.Box 6, al-Safat 1300, Kuwait

**Fax:** +965 243 5220

**COPIES TO:**

Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee

Saleh al-Fadhallah

Chairperson, Parliamentary Human Rights Committee National Assembly  
P.O. Box 716, al-Safat 13008, Kuwait

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**Salutation:** Dear Sir

and to diplomatic representatives of Kuwait accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 May 2008.