

**LEBANON** Ahmad Rida Yassin, 68

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Ahmad Rida Yassin, a 68-year old Lebanese national, may face imminent execution after a plea for clemency was turned down by the Lebanese Amnesty Committee. In October 1997, the Criminal Court of Cassation upheld the conviction of Ahmad Rida Yassin by the Sidan Criminal Court for murdering Zahra 'Attiyah.

The Criminal Court of Cassation was of the opinion that Ahmad Rida Yassin was entitled to have his sentence reduced. However, it was prevented from granting this right by the provisions of Article 2 of the 1994 death penalty Law No.302. Law No.302 suspended Articles 547 and 548 of the Penal Code which proscribe respectively up to 20 years' imprisonment with hard labour, and life imprisonment with hard labour for the crime of murder, and replaced the sentence with the death penalty.

It is not clear, in the circumstances, whether the sentence can still be commuted by the President of the Republic in accordance with Article 455 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and Article 152 of the Penal Code. The death penalty can only be carried out after the approval of the President of the Republic.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since the expansion of the death penalty in March 1994, about 30 death sentences have been passed by Lebanese courts, and 12 judicial executions were carried out by December 1997. This compares with only three executions carried out in over three decades prior to the 1994 death penalty legislation. The *Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature* (Supreme Judicial Council) has reportedly appealed to the President of the Republic for a special clemency.

Amnesty International has urged the Lebanese authorities to review the 1994 death penalty law with a view to phasing out this punishment, and has called on the Lebanese authorities to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

While Amnesty International recognizes the responsibility of governments to bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice according to international standards, it is opposed in principle to the application of the death penalty, as the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment and a violation of the right to life. The possibility of miscarriage of justice always remains, and execution cannot be revoked once it has been carried out.

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

- expressing concern at the passing of the death penalty on Ahmad Rida Yassin and calling for the sentence to be commuted;
- expressing regret at the expansion of the scope of the death penalty and urging for the abrogation of the 1994 death penalty law and the phasing out of the death penalty;
- calling on the Lebanese authorities to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

**APPEALS TO:**

President Elias Hrawi  
Presidential Palace  
Ba'abda, Beirut  
Lebanon  
**Telegrams: President Hrawi, Beirut, Lebanon**  
**Telephone: +961 1 865 100/1/2**  
**Fax: +961 1 425 393**  
**Telexes: 21000**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

His Excellency Bahij Tabbara  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Rue Sami Solh  
Beirut  
Lebanon  
**Telegrams: Minister Tabbara, Beirut, Lebanon**  
**Telephone: +961 1 422 944**  
**961 1 422 956**  
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**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Justice Munir Hunayn  
President  
Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature  
Palais de Justice  
Beirut  
Lebanon  
**Telegrams: Justice Hunayn, Beirut, Lebanon**  
**Fax: + 961 1 422 957 (c/o Ministry of Justice)**  
**Salutation: Dear Sir**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Lebanon accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 March 1998.