

PUBLIC

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Increase

**SAUDI ARABIA6 people amputated
11 people executed**

Amnesty International is alarmed at the number of executions and amputations that have taken place in Saudi Arabia this year and fears that at least 30 others currently in detention under suspicion of "sorcery" and theft are at risk of amputation or execution after unfair trials.

Since the beginning of this year there have been 11 executions - four for murder and six for rape as well as the execution of Hassan bin Awad al-Zubair, a Sudanese national, on 28 February in Riyadh after he was convicted on charges of "sorcery". So far this year, six amputations have been carried out. Four of these were cross-amputations (right hand and left foot), three of which were for assault and theft of taxi drivers in Riyadh. At this time last year, seven executions had been carried out, and Amnesty International recorded two amputations during the whole of 1999.

According to a report in *Okaz* newspaper on 31 October 1999, 25 people were under arrest on suspicion of sorcery in the Asir region of the country. Some or all of these may be at risk of execution.

According to a report in *Al-Jazeera* newspaper on 26 February, at least five people have been arrested and reportedly confessed to 159 counts of theft said to have taken place in Riyadh over the past few years. The penalty for those found guilty of theft or highway robbery can be the amputation of the right hand or cross amputation. In cases of repeated theft, the offence may be considered by the courts to amount to "corruption on earth", for which the punishment is death. Some or all of the detainees may face amputation or death if convicted.

Amnesty International considers judicial amputation to be a form of torture amounting to cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment in line with international human rights law. It therefore considers Saudi Arabia to have violated the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, when it became a state party in 1997. The organization is also concerned that capital trials in Saudi Arabia do not comply with internationally recognized standards for fair trial. Confessions obtained under duress, torture or by deception are sometimes admitted in court and may be the sole evidence on which conviction is based.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia imposes the death penalty for a number of crimes including drug trafficking, murder, rape, armed robbery, apostasy (turning away from Islam) and anything considered to amount to "corruption on earth". In 1996 'Abd al-Karim Mir'i al-Nakshabandi, a Syrian national, was executed after being charged with 'magic and witchcraft'. It is believed that neither he nor his family were aware of the death sentence until his execution was announced by the Ministry of the Interior.

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

- expressing concern at the alarming number of executions and amputations carried out in Saudi Arabia since the start of 2000;

- calling for an immediate halt to amputations and executions and the commutation of any such pending sentences;
- seeking clarification of the identities and legal status of all those arrested in connection with sorcery and theft;
- urging the authorities not to impose sentences of amputation or death on any of them.

APPEALS TO (please note that fax numbers to Saudi can be very unreliable):

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines

His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Office of H.M. The King, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness, Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior
PO Box 2833, Airport Road, Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Telexes: 404416

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness
Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nasseriya Street, Riyadh 11124
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Foreign Affairs Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Faxes: + 966 1 403 0159

Telexes: 405000

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency
Dr. 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Telexes: 405 980 MINJUS SJ

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: to diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 April 2000.