

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 25/01/93  
Distrib: PG/SC

Date: 24 March 1993

*MEDICAL CONCERN*  
**Amputations**  
**UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

On 11 March 1993 two men convicted of piracy by a court in the United Arab Emirates were sentenced, according to a Reuters press report, to suffer punitive amputation. An AFP report carried in the Daily Telegraph (London, 12 March 1993) quoted an unnamed official as saying that "The court ordered the amputation of one hand and one leg of each [of the convicted men]. The sentence will be carried out in public". It is likely that the punishment would mean the amputation of e.g. a right hand and left foot.

The two men, a UAE national and a Pakistani national, were convicted in the emirate of Fujairah, of boarding a freighter in 1989 and stealing cargo worth around \$3 million. According to press reports, they have the right to appeal against the conviction and sentence.

Although this is the first reported sentence in the UAE of cross-limb amputation (amputation of a hand and foot from opposite sides of the body), corporal punishment in the form of amputation of a hand and in the form of whipping were reported in 1992 when Amnesty International repeated appeals to the authorities to stop the use of such punishments. It is not clear who will carry out these amputations or what role will be played by medical personnel. In other countries where amputations have been practised, doctors have been involved in training or supervising the punishment, in sedating the prisoner or in standing by to provide follow up aid. It has fallen on hospital doctors to sometimes carry out resectioning of clumsy amputations.

Amnesty International believes that the use of any medical skill by physicians to assist in the infliction of any form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment would be contrary to international codes of medical ethics. The World Medical Association's Declaration of Tokyo, adopted in 1975, states at Article 2:

"The doctor shall not provide any premises, instruments, substances or knowledge to facilitate the practice of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or to diminish the ability of the victim to resist such treatment."

Amnesty International holds amputation to be a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment which, as such, is prohibited internationally by the United Nations' Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In August 1984 the United Nations' Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted a resolution (1984/22) recommending the United Nations

Commission on Human Rights to urge governments which had legislation providing for the penalty of amputation to prescribe different punishments in accordance with Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which prohibits "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". Amnesty International urges the authorities in the United Arab Emirates not to go ahead with this punishment and further urges the medical profession in UAE to oppose any medical involvement in amputations.

INTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 25/01/93  
Distrib: PG/SC

To: Medical groups  
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Middle East  
Date: 24 March 1993

*LIMITED MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION*

**Amputations  
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

**Keywords**

Theme: Amputations/corporal punishment/medical ethics

**Summary**

On 11 March 1993, two men from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Pakistan were reportedly convicted of piracy and sentenced to amputation of a hand and a foot. Amnesty International regards such a punishment as cruel, inhuman and degrading and views medical participation in such a punishment as unethical. The organization is calling on the UAE authorities not to go ahead with the punishment and is urging the UAE medical profession to oppose it.

**Recommended Actions**

**A maximum of five letters per group** are requested to the address given below:

- expressing concern at the sentence of amputation reported to have been imposed on two men convicted of piracy in March 1993 in Fujairah;
- stating that you hold amputation to be a form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment which violates international standards of human rights and urging that alternative forms of punishment be imposed;
- expressing concern that doctors may be called on to assist in such a punishment in contradiction of internationally-agreed codes of medical ethics which prohibit a doctor from countenancing, condoning or facilitating such practices;
- asking for details of the procedures used: who carries out the amputation; what role is played by medical personnel; what training is given to those who perform the amputations and by whom;
- urging that legislation is introduced to prevent further amputations from taking place and that the punishment be suspended.

2

**Address:**

H.H. al- Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed al-Sharqi  
Ruler of Fujairah  
Supreme Court of Rulers  
PO Box 545  
Abu Dhabi  
United Arab Emirates