

URGENT ACTION

FOUR PEOPLE SENTENCED TO DEATH IN BAHRAIN

Four men accused of killing two policemen during anti-government protests last month have been sentenced to death in Bahrain. They may be at imminent risk of execution.

Ali Abdullah Hassan al-Sankis, Qassim Hassan Matar, Saeed Abduljalil Saeed and Abdulaziz Abdulridha Ibrahim Hussain were sentenced to death on 28 April by a military court although they are believed to be civilians, Their trial was conducted behind closed doors. The prosecution accused them of the premeditated murder of two police officers during anti-government protests in March by deliberately running them down with a vehicle. They and three other defendants tried with them - Issa Abdullah Kadhim Ali, Sadeq Ali Mahdi and Hussein Jaafar Abdulkarim – who were convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment, all reportedly deny the charge.

The seven defendants are believed to have been tried by a special court, the National Safety Court of First Instance, which was established under the State of National Safety (SNS), a national state of emergency declared by the King of Bahrain on 15 March. The provisions of the SNS are broadly drawn and vague, and it contains no explicit human rights guarantees. The SNS also established the National Safety Court of First Instance to try people accused of crimes committed under the state of emergency, and a National Safety Appeal Court to hear appeals from this special court. The SNS stipulates that Bahrain's ordinary courts may not hear appeals from these special courts, whose verdicts are final.

It is expected but not yet confirmed that the seven defendants will lodge appeals. If this does occur, the appeals may be held very quickly and the four prisoners under sentence of death may be at imminent risk of execution. The seven are believed to have been held incommunicado for some time following their arrests which are believed to have taken place on or after 16 March, and they may have been subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or Arabic:

- Expressing grave concern at the imposition of death sentences on Ali Abdullah Hassan al-Sankis, Qassim Hassan Matar, Saeed Abduljalil Saeed and Abdulaziz Abdulridha Ibrahim Hussain after a military court trial behind closed doors.
- Acknowledging the Bahraini government's responsibility to protect the public and bring to justice those responsible for committing crimes, but insisting that this should always be done in accordance with international law and Bahrain's international human rights obligations;
- Urging His Majesty Shaikh Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa to commute the death sentences imposed today and those of all others facing possible execution in Bahrain if they are confirmed by appeal courts
- Urging His Majesty to establish a full, thorough and independent inquiry into all alleged abuses of human rights committed during the recent protests, including allegations of unlawful killings by the security forces, with a view to ensuring that those responsible for serious abuses are brought to justice through fair trials and without recourse to the death penalty.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 JUNE 2011 TO:

King Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al
Khalifa
Office of His Majesty the King
P.O. Box 555
Rifa'a Palace, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17664587
Salutation: Your Majesty

Copies to:
Prime Minister
Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17533033
Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Justice and Islamic
Affairs
Shaikh Khaled bin Ali al-Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic
Affairs
P. O. Box 450, Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17531284
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

UA: 122/11 Bahrain Index: MDE 11/023/2011 Issue Date: 28 April 2011

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