

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 06/02                    Fear of Execution/Possible Prisoners                    17 January 2002  
of Conscience

SAUDI ARABIA                    Duhayman Muhammad al-Hatila (m), aged 34  
   Mish'il al-Hussain Barman bel-Harith (m), aged 22  
   and at least 15 others

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Amnesty International is concerned at reports that at least 17 people from the Ismaili community in Saudi Arabia are at risk of execution possibly as early as tomorrow. The organization does not have all the names of the 17 detainees held in al-Hair prison in Riyadh, but they are said to include Duhayman Muhammad al-Hatila and Mish'il al-Hussain Barman bel-Harith. The circumstances of the trials and the charges brought against the detainees is always kept secret by the Saudi Arabian government in such cases.

The 17 were among hundreds of people reportedly arrested in April 2000 following protests by members of the Ismaili religious community in Najran, south-west Saudi Arabia. The protests took place following the closure of their mosque by Saudi Arabian security forces and the arrest of one person on suspicion of practising "sorcery", which can carry the death penalty in Saudi Arabia. At least two people were reportedly killed and many others were injured.

Amnesty International fears that those killed may have been victims of extrajudicial execution or excessive use of force, and that those detained may be prisoners of conscience, held solely for the non-violent expression of their conscientiously held beliefs. Amnesty International sought clarification of the circumstances surrounding the killings and the arrests, but has not received a response. However, it is reported that over 100 people arrested during the protests continue to be held, including the 17 said to be at risk of execution.

The use of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia is of grave concern to Amnesty International. From January 2000 to December 2001 at least 202 people were executed. So far in 2002, Saudi Arabia has executed at least 3 people. On 1 January 2002 three Saudi Arabian nationals, were executed in Abha, Asir province. The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Interior issued a statement announcing that the three were convicted of homosexual acts, adding vaguely-worded charges of "luring children and harming others" without providing any further details.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offences which, in addition to violent crimes, include some with no lethal consequences, such as sorcery, certain sexual offences, drug-related offences and apostasy (converting from Islam to another religion). Sentencing occurs after trials which fall short of internationally agreed standards - trials are held behind closed doors and defendants do not have the right to formal representation by a lawyer. In many cases defendants and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Defendants may also be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress, torture or deception.

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

- seeking clarification of reports that at least 17 people from the Ismaili community in Saudi Arabia are at risk of execution, and urging the Saudi Arabian authorities to ensure that Duhayman Muhammad al-Hatila, Mish'il al-Hussain Barman bel-Harith and at least 15 others are not executed;

- asking for the names of all those who remain in detention following the demonstrations in Najran in April 2000, what they have been charged with as well as details of any trials which may have taken place;
- calling for a moratorium on executions in Saudi Arabia as called for by the United Nations, and the commutation of any pending death sentences;
- acknowledging the Saudi Arabian government's right to bring to justice anyone found responsible for recognizably criminal offences, but expressing your unconditional opposition to the death penalty in all cases as it violates the right to life.
- urging that anyone held solely for the non-violent expression of their conscientiously held beliefs is released immediately and unconditionally

**APPEALS TO:**

King and Prime Minister, The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines  
His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud  
Office of H.M. The King, Royal Court, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
**Telegrams: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.**  
**Salutation: Your Majesty.**

Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Commander of the National Guard  
His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud  
Royal Court, Riyadh  
**Telegrams: H.R.H Prince Abdullah, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

Minister of the Interior,  
His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz  
Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior  
P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road, Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
**Fax: + 966 1 403 1185**  
**Telegram: Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

Minister of Justice  
His Excellency Dr. 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh  
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, University Street, Riyadh 11137,  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
**Fax: + 966 1 401 1741**  
**Telegram: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES 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 28 February 2002.