

SAUDI ARABIA Execution: Mir Afdal Omar Shah (Pakistani)

Mir Afdal Omar Shah was beheaded on 10 July, becoming the 65th person executed in Saudi Arabia this year.

Of those executed this year 23 have been Saudi Arabian and 39 foreign nationals, from Nigeria, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Egypt, Iraq and Syria. The nationality of three others is not known.

The number of reported amputations as punishment has also increased significantly this year. To date Amnesty International has recorded 29 amputations, seven of which have been cross amputations - amputation of the right hand and left foot. The organization recorded two amputations in the whole of 1999.

While Amnesty International does not know how many people are on death row or how many face amputation, the organization fears that there are many more people currently in Saudi Arabian prisons, who could lose their lives or limbs tomorrow, or at any time in the weeks and months to come. Most, if not all, will have been sentenced after grossly unfair trials in which even the most basic rights - the right to be defended by a lawyer and the right to an effective appeal - are denied. They may also have been convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress, torture or deception.

Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of all governments to bring to justice those guilty of recognizably criminal offences. However, Amnesty International is fundamentally opposed to the death penalty as the ultimate violation of the right to life and considers the cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment of judicial amputation to be a form of torture. The organization is committed to defending all people against the violations of these fundamental and internationally recognized rights, in line with Articles 3 and 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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 and drug-related offences. Punishment by amputation is imposed mainly for theft, for which the sentence is amputation of the right hand, and highway robbery, which is punished by cross amputation. International human rights standards prohibit torture and other cruel punishments, such as amputation.

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

- expressing dismay at the continuing use of the death penalty and amputations in Saudi Arabia, and calling for an immediate halt to these punishments, and for all such outstanding sentences to be commuted;
- urging that international standards for capital trials are strictly observed.

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

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

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior
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Fax: + 966 1 403 1185
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Salutation:Your Royal Highness

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud
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Salutation:Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr. 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
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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 22 August 2000.