

PUBLIC

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Fear of t

SAUDI ARABIA Sheikh 'Ali bin Dhib al-Mahan, teacher
Mahdi bin Dhib al-Mahan, teacher
Other detained members of the Ismaili community

The two teachers named above have reportedly been sentenced to 1,500 lashes on charges of "sorcery". Many others arrested with them are now held incommunicado. Amnesty International fears that many may be prisoners of conscience, and that they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Sheikh 'Ali bin Dhib al-Mahan and Mahdi bin Dhib al-Mahan are members of the Ismaili sect of Shi'a Islam, one of Saudi Arabia's religious minorities. They were among scores of people arrested in Najran in April, after members of the town's Ismaili community protested against the closure of their mosque by security forces. They are said to have been sentenced to a year in prison and 1,500 lashes, to be carried out in front of their families, students and other teachers.

The others arrested with them are said to be held incommunicado. None has been given access to lawyers. Many of their families have not been told where they are held. Amnesty International wrote to the Saudi government on 26 April, asking what the prisoners' legal status was, and seeking assurances that they would be given prompt and regular access to families, lawyers and any medical attention they needed. The government has not replied.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Members of religious minority groups and political opponents of the Saudi Arabian government often risk arbitrary arrest and detention and may be detained indefinitely without charge or trial simply for their beliefs.

Flogging is a widely used punishment in Saudi Arabia and is regularly inflicted in prisons and public squares throughout the country. It can be applied for a wide range of offences, and there appears to be no upper limit on the amount of lashes which can be carried out.

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

- urging that the sentences of flogging imposed on Sheikh 'Ali bin Dhib al-Mahan and Mahdi bin Dhib al-Mahan not be carried out;
- urging that all those detained are being humanely treated and given regular access to lawyers, families and medical attention if necessary;
- stating that anyone held solely on account of their conscientiously held beliefs is a prisoner of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally.

APPEALS TO: (please note that Saudi Arabian 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
Telegram: 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,
P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road,
Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegram: Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 403 1185
Telex:404416
Salutation:Your Royal Highness

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Nasseriya Street,
Riyadh 11124, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegram: Foreign Affairs Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 403 0159
Telex:405000
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
Telegram: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 401 1741
Telex:405 980 MINJUS SJ
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 20 November 2000.