

SAUDI ARABIA

Use of the death penalty has increased greatly in Saudi Arabia in recent months. At least 59 people are detained on charges which carry the death penalty, and Amnesty International fears that some or all face imminent execution. Two people, both Saudi Arabian nationals, have been executed in the past week.

`Abd al-Aziz Bin Faraj Bin Muharib al-Shammiri was beheaded on 12 October, and Sultan al-Shahri was beheaded on 15 October.

Amnesty International has now recorded 95 executions this year, with 19 people put to death in the month of September alone. By comparison, in 1998 the organisation recorded a total of 29 executions.

Amnesty International is concerned that capital trials in Saudi Arabia do not comply with internationally recognised standards for fair trial, such as Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and resolution 1984/50 adopted by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), on the Safeguards guaranteeing the protection of those facing the death penalty. Although Saudi Arabia acceded to the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1997, confessions obtained under duress, torture or by deception are sometimes admitted in court.

At least 59 people are known to be currently detained on charges which carry the death penalty, but the real figure may well be much higher. Amnesty International has sought information from the Saudi Arabian government on these 59 people, but has not received any response. As scheduled executions are not announced in advance, some or all of these people may be at risk of imminent execution. (See UA 251/99, AI Index MDE 23/08/99, 27 September 1999).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia imposes the death penalty for drug trafficking, murder, rape, armed robbery and apostasy (turning away from Islam). Of the 95 people put to death this year, 49 were foreign nationals, including 12 Pakistanis, 10 Nigerians (three of them women), nine Afghans, six Indians, as well as nationals of Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Syria, Jordan, Ethiopia, Chad and Yemen.

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

- calling for an immediate halt to all executions and the commutation of all outstanding death sentences;
- expressing dismay at the increased use of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia in recent months;
- expressing concern that executions are carried out after trials that fall short of international standards, and urging the authorities to follow international standards for capital trials.

APPEALS TO:

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines
His Majesty King Fahd bin `Abdul-`Aziz
Office of H.M. The King
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
PO Box 2833, Airport Road,

Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Interior Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Faxes: + 966 1 403 1185
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
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Information
His Excellency Dr. Fuad Abdul Salam Al-Farsi
Minister of Information, Ministry of Information
PO Box 843, Riyadh 11161,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 402 3570
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 29 November 1999.