

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 11/03/97

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Fear of further amputations

24 April 1997

AFGHANISTANNames not known

Reports from Kabul indicate that at least one man has been punished by the Taleban with amputation of his hand and foot on 21 April 1997. This raises fear that further amputations may follow. According to some sources, at least two other men are awaiting amputation, but Amnesty International believes the number of those likely to be subjected to this cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment may be much higher.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Within the last two years, dozens of prisoners have been subjected to amputations in Afghanistan. Some of these have been carried out after the victims had been sentenced by Islamic courts convened by the Taleban which often decided a dozen cases a day in sessions which took only a few minutes. There are no provisions for legal counsel or the presumption of innocence. Verdicts are final, with no mechanism for appeal. Frequently, the order to amputate is given by a Taleban commander or official without even any court formality.

Some amputations have been carried out by doctors but many doctors refuse to get involved. In most cases, amputations are carried out by very young Taleban guards who rejoice in the cruel act. For example, two men from Uruzgan arrested in April 1996 on charges of theft had their left hand and right feet cut off by jubilant Taleban guards who had beaten them severely before the amputation. The guards reportedly pressed red hot iron plates against the wounds to stop the bleeding.

Judicial amputation as well as other forms of corporal punishment and torture violate the most elementary standards of humane behaviour. Indeed the prohibition of mutilation, cruel treatment and torture is part of customary international humanitarian principles and is recognized in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

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

- expressing grave concern about frequent reports of amputations in Taleban-controlled areas including the one carried out on 21 April 1997 in Kabul;
- expressing concern that more people are reportedly awaiting this cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment;
- urging the Taleban authorities not to subject any other persons to amputation;
- urging them to forbid the imposition of amputations in areas they control.

APPEALS IN EQUAL NUMBERS TO:

1. Mullah Mohammad Omar, Leader of the Taleban
2. Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, the Taleban Governor of Kabul (no relation to former President Burhanuddin Rabbani)

Embassy of Afghanistan (now run by Taleban)
House No. 8, Street No. 90
Islamabad G-6/3, Pakistan

Fax: +92 51 82 45 04

Telegrams: Embassy Afghanistan, House 8, Street 90, Islamabad, Pakistan

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Salutation: 1. Dear Mullah Mohammad Omar, and 2. Dear Mullah Mohammad Rabbani

NO COPIES

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 June 1997.