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BAHRAIN - AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS FIRST EXECUTION IN NEARLY
20 YEARS

Amnesty International strongly condemns today's execution of 'Issa Ahmad Hassan Qambar -- the first execution known to have been carried out Bahrain for nearly 20 years.

"We are dismayed that this execution went ahead despite repeated appeals to Bahrain's ruler not to carry out the death sentence," Amnesty International said today. "We seriously fear that this will now pave the way for further death sentences and executions."

'Issa Ahmad Qambar was sentenced to death after a trial which ignored internationally accepted human rights standards requiring adequate legal assistance at all stages of the proceedings. He was denied access to a lawyer throughout his pre-trial detention and saw his lawyer for the first time only when he appeared in court for trial on charges of the murder of a police sergeant. Trial sessions were held *in camera*.

'Issa Ahmad Hassan Qambar was sentenced to death by the Bahraini High Criminal Court on 4 July 1995 after being convicted of the murder of Sergeant Major Ibrahim Rashed 'Abd al-Karim al-Sa'idi. His body was found knifed to death in the village of Nuwaidrat on 23 March 1995 in the wake of riots and clashes with security forces. The unrest begun in December 1994 with mass demonstrations for more civil and political rights.

During the last month before his execution, 'Issa Ahmad Hassan Qambar was denied any family visits. The authorities also failed to notify his family of his impending execution, informing them only after it was carried out by firing squad at dawn on 26 March 1996.

Women friends and relatives who tried to visit the family home earlier today were reportedly dispersed by police using teargas.

Amnesty International is calling on Bahrain's ruler, the Amir, Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman Al Khalifa to stop any further executions.

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