

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 23/01/93  
Distrib: PG/SC

To: Medical professionals  
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Middle East  
Date: 8 February 1993

### *MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION*

#### **Torture and deaths in custody SAUDI ARABIA**

#### **Keywords**

Theme: cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment / death in custody / torture

#### **Summary**

Amnesty International is gravely concerned about the health and well-being of Muhammad Hassan Daoud al-Shabeeb, approximately 21-years-old, who was reportedly tortured following arrest in October 1992. He was held incommunicado in *al-Mabahith al-'Ama* (General Intelligence) prison in al-Dammam in the Eastern Province, and was transferred on 2 February 1993 to the intensive care unit of al-Dammam Central Hospital. The organization is calling for investigations into his current situation, for assurances that he will receive all necessary medical care and that those found responsible for his ill-treatment are punished.

Over the past year at least four people have died while in the custody of police or security authorities in Saudi Arabia. In the four cases known to Amnesty International, it is credibly alleged that the detainees were subjected to ill-treatment or torture. The four victims were:

- Muhammad bin Fahd al-Mutayr, 27-year-old Saudi Arabian citizen, died early April 1992 (see Urgent Action MDE 23/04/92, 13 July 1992);
- 'Abdullah 'Abbas, 39-year-old Ghanaian national, died 18 April 1992 (see medical action MDE 23/03/92, 15 June 1992);
- Zuhair al-'Awami, 18-year-old Saudi Arabian citizen, died mid-November 1992;
- Hussein Habib al-Shuwaykhat, 17-year-old Saudi Arabian citizen, died 18 January 1993;

The organization has raised the above four cases with the Saudi Arabian authorities without success and continues to urge the government to impartially investigate these deaths and to make public the findings of any inquiry.

#### **Recommended Actions**

Letters from medical professionals, preferably written in Arabic, English, otherwise your own language, should be sent to the addresses below:

- expressing concern at the reported torture of Muhammad Hassan Daoud al-Shabeeb, currently believed to be in al-Dammam Central Hospital;
- seeking information on his current state of health and the treatment he is receiving, and seeking assurances that his well-being is safe-guarded;
- asking whether an investigation into his reported torture has been commenced and asking to be informed of the findings of any inquiry;
- referring to the four deaths in custody known to have occurred over the past year (you could list the names given above);
- asking whether any inquiry has been conducted into these deaths and, if not, that they be investigated without delay and the findings made public
- urging that clear instructions be given to all law-enforcement agencies that ill-treatment of detainees is unacceptable and that abuses will be punished.

### **Addresses**

His Royal Highness  
 Prince Naif bin 'Abd al-'Aziz  
 Minister of the Interior  
 Ministry of the Interior  
 Airport Street  
 Riyadh 11234  
 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: +966-1-4050130 or  
 +966-1-4793680  
 Telex: 404416 DMMOISJ

*Salutation:* Your Royal Highness

His Royal Highness  
 Prince Muhammad bin Fahd  
 Governor of the Eastern Province  
 al-Dammam  
 The Eastern Province  
 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

*Salutation:* Your Royal Highness

**Copies of your appeals** could be sent to the diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia in your country.

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*MEDICAL CONCERN*

**Torture and deaths in custody  
 SAUDI ARABIA**

Muhammad Hassan Daoud al-Shabeeb, around 21-years-old, was arrested on 20 October 1992, apparently on suspicion of being in possession of Shi'a Muslim opposition literature and audio tapes. He was reportedly subjected to torture while held at *al-Mabahith al-'Ammah* (General Intelligence) prison in al-Dammam, in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Muhammad al-Shabeeb, who comes from Um al-Hammam village, al-Qatif, also in the Eastern Province, is a student at the Institute of Administration (*Ma'had al-Idara*) in al-Dammam. He was reported to have been held incommunicado and in solitary confinement for nearly two months. On 2 February 1993, he was transferred to the intensive care unit of al-Dammam Central Hospital. Amnesty International does not have details of the problems which led to his transfer but is very concerned for his well-being in the light of other cases of serious injury and death following torture in Saudi Arabia. The organization is also urging that he be released unless he is, or has been, charged with a recognizably criminal offense.

**Background**

Torture is commonly used in Saudi Arabia against both political prisoners and common criminals. In the past year, Amnesty International has raised with the Saudi Arabian authorities the cases of four detainees who died in suspicious circumstances while in the custody of the police or the security authorities. In three of the cases, it was alleged that the death occurred as a result of torture and in the fourth case, death was said to have resulted from the denial of medical care until shortly before the detainee's death. The four who died were:

**Muhammad bin Fahd al-Mutayr.** A 27-year-old Saudi citizen, died early April 1992. He was employed at the Saudi British Bank in the district of al-Rawda in the capital, Riyadh. Following a robbery of the bank's cash machine at the end of the holy month of Ramadan (4 March to 2 April 1992), he was arrested, together with a Sudanese national, and taken by police officers to a detention centre in the city. A few days after their arrest Muhammad bin Fahd al-Mutayr died in custody, reportedly as a result of torture, his body allegedly bearing marks of severe beatings. The government has not responded to Amnesty International's enquiries in this case.

**'Abdullah 'Abbas.** A 39-year-old Ghanaian national, died 18 April 1992. (see medical action MDE 23/03/92, 15 June 1992). He died at King Fahd Hospital in Jeddah, shortly after being admitted from Jeddah Deportation Centre where he had been held for around two weeks for over-staying after his visa had expired. Fellow detainees at the centre reported that he appeared

to have been beaten and was unable to communicate easily, to take food, or to move freely. He was only transferred to hospital when on the point of death and had not received any medical care prior to that. His death was reported to have resulted from cardiac and respiratory failure due to meningitis. The government has not responded to Amnesty International's enquiries in this case.

**Zuhair al-'Awami.** An 18-year-old Saudi Arabian citizen, died mid-November 1992. He was arrested while leaving a friend's house in Safwa, in the Eastern Province, in the first week of November and taken to *al-Mabahith al-'Amm* prison in al-Dammam. About a week later, Zuhair al-'Awami was returned to his home, his body reportedly bearing signs of severe beating. His family tried to take him to the King Fahd Hospital in the Eastern Province, but he died en route. Zuhair al 'Awami's father was allegedly forced to sign a statement pronouncing that his son's death was natural.

The reasons for Zuhair al-'Awami's arrest are not known to Amnesty International. The organization wrote to the Saudi Arabian authorities in mid-December 1992 about his case but has not received any response.

**Hussein Habib al-Shuwaykhat.** A 17-year-old Saudi Arabian student, died 18 January 1993 in *al-Mabahith al-'Ama* prison in al-'Awamiya in the Eastern Province. He was reportedly arrested in March 1991 on suspicion of theft. He was held without charge or trial and, because of his age, would have been sent to reform centre if convicted of any crime. His body was returned to his family on 23 January 1993. He is reported to have suffered internal bleeding and "brain damage" though no further details are available on his health during detention or the exact cause of death. Amnesty International wrote to the Saudi Arabian authorities on 28 January 1993 seeking clarification of the circumstances of his death.

Amnesty International urges the government of Saudi Arabia to make public the results of any investigations, including post-mortem examinations, into the deaths listed above. If no investigations have been undertaken, the organization urges that they be commenced without delay and that the findings be made public. Meanwhile, Amnesty International urges that the government instruct law-enforcement agencies that the use of torture against detainees and prisoners in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is unacceptable and will be punished.