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## **Saudi Arabia executes man convicted of "sorcery"**

Saudi Arabia's government should establish an immediate moratorium on executions in the kingdom, Amnesty International said today after a Sudanese man convicted of "sorcery" was put to death.

Abdul Hamid bin Hussain bin Moustafa al-Fakki was beheaded in Madina on Monday. Saudi Arabia has now executed 44 people this year. Eleven were foreign nationals.

"Abdul Hamid's execution is appalling as is Saudi Arabia's continuing use of this most cruel and extreme penalty," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"That he should have been executed without having committed anything that would appear to constitute a crime is yet another deeply upsetting example of why the Saudi Arabian government should immediately cease executions and take steps to abolish the death penalty."

The crime of "sorcery" is not defined in Saudi Arabian law but it has been used to punish people for the legitimate exercise of their human rights, including their right to freedom of expression.

Abdul Hamid bin Hussain bin Moustafa al-Fakki was arrested in 2005 after he was entrapped by a man working for the Mutawa'een (religious police) who asked him to produce a spell that would lead to the man's father leaving his second wife.

It was alleged that Abdul Hamid said he would do this in exchange for 6,000 Saudi Arabian riyals (approximately US\$1,600).

Reportedly beaten after his arrest, Abdul Hamid is believed to have been coerced to confess to carrying out acts of sorcery.

He was sentenced to death by the General Court in Madina in March 2007. Few details are available about his trial but he is reported to have been tried behind closed doors and without legal representation.

Amnesty International campaigned on Abdul Hamid's behalf following his arrest and had urged Saudi Arabia's King 'Abdullah to prevent his execution.

Since the end of the holy month of Ramadan a few weeks ago, the Saudi Arabian authorities have resumed executions at an alarming pace.

Seven people are known to have been put to death since executions resumed on 5 September, bringing the total executed so far this year to at least 44. In 2010 a total of 27 people were executed.

Two weeks ago Syrian national, Karim Ruslan Al-Ruslan was executed in the Jouf Region for smuggling drugs into the kingdom.

Around 140 prisoners are believed to be facing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia.

Last December, Saudi Arabia was one of a minority of states that voted against a UN general assembly resolution calling for the worldwide moratorium on executions.