

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 23/001/2008

03 January 2008

UA 02/08

Fear of Imminent Execution

SAUDI ARABIA

Al-Qahtani (m)

A death row prisoner known as Al-Qahtani was given a one month stay of execution only moments before his sentence was due to be carried out on 1 January, 2008. He is being held at al-Dammam Prison in the Eastern province. A number of tribal leaders and the head of a pardons committee are reportedly urging the family of the victim to pardon Al-Qahtani. However, until this happens he remains at risk of imminent execution.

Al-Qahtani was reportedly sentenced to death for murdering a relative an unspecified number of years ago. Under the Shari'a law of *Qisas* (retribution), relatives of the murder victim may pardon the offender for free or in exchange for *diyya* (financial compensation). They also have the option of seeking an execution. Under *Qisas*, the brother of the murder victim reportedly halted the process of execution so that he could consult the rest of his family as to whether to pardon Al-Qahtani or to ask for his execution.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offences. Court proceedings fall far short of international standards for fair trial. Defendants are rarely allowed formal representation by a lawyer, and in many cases are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. They may be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress or deception.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Arabic or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to stop the execution of Al-Qahtani immediately,
- urging King Abdullah Bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud to commute Al-Qahtani's death sentence immediately;
- acknowledging that the government has the right and responsibility to bring to justice those responsible for criminal offences, but expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

His Majesty King Abdullah Bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty The King
Royal Court
Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Salutation: Your Majesty

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
P.O. Box 2933
Airport Road
Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 403 1185
+ 966 1 403 3614

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nasseriya Street
Riyadh 11124

Fax: +966 1 403 0645

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

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 14 March 2008.