

PUBLIC

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Fear of flogging

SAUDI ARABIA

16 school pupils (ages and genders not known)

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According to press reports, a court in the northern region of Hail has sentenced 16 secondary and middle school pupils, believed to be aged between 12 and 18, to a total of 5,800 lashes, in addition to prison terms. The 16 pupils, all of whom may be children (under the age of 18), are at risk of imminent flogging.

The 16 were convicted in two separate cases. Nine of the 16 pupils were found guilty of aggression towards a teacher at Amayer Hudayan Middle School, some 280km south of Hail City. They were each sentenced to receive between 300 and 500 lashes, and they all received prison sentences ranging from six to eight months. The remaining seven pupils, from al-Majsa Secondary School, about 40km from the Middle School, were found guilty of attacks against their fellow pupils. They each received sentences of 300 lashes and six months imprisonment.

The pupils are currently believed to be serving their prison sentences. The lashings could be carried out at any time, at different schools in the region, in front of pupils, apparently to serve as a deterrent to others.

Amnesty International believes that the use of corporal judicial punishment always constitutes torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, in contravention of Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". In addition, the use of such punishment is forbidden under the terms of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which Saudi Arabia is a state party.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Flogging is mandatory in Saudi Arabia for a number of offences, and can also be used at the discretion of judges as an alternative or addition to other punishments. Sentences can range from dozens to thousands of lashes and are imposed on adults as well as children, often after trials which fail to meet basic standards of fairness.

Saudi Arabia's delegation appeared before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in March 2000 and gave assurances that the use of corporal punishment against children was prohibited. Such treatment of children is clearly inconsistent with Saudi Arabia's obligation under Article 37 of the CRC, which requires the State to protect children from torture and ill-treatment. The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended in 2001 that Saudi Arabia take all necessary steps to 'end the imposition of corporal punishment, including flogging and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment to persons who may have committed crimes under the age of 18' and urged in 2006 the 'abolition of extrajudicial and summary floggings of teenagers'.

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

- expressing concern at reports that 16 pupils from Amayer Hudayan Middle School and al-Majsa Secondary School are to be flogged, and asking for details of the two cases;
- urging the authorities not to carry out the sentences
- stating that you consider the use of flogging as punishment to be torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, contrary to Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment";

- expressing particular concern that, according to reports, some or all of those sentenced to be flogged are under the age of 18, and therefore the use of corporal punishment against them is expressly prohibited by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Saudi Arabia is a state party..

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin Abdul Aziz,  
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 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)

**Salutation:** Your Royal Highness

Minister of Foreign Affairs

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

**Fax:** + 966 1 403 0159 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)

**Salutation:** Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh  
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice  
University Street,  
Riyadh 11137, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Fax:** + 966 1 401 1741

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

King and Prime Minister

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines

His Majesty King Abdullah bin >Abdul >Aziz Al-Saud,  
Office of H.M. The King, Royal Court,  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Salutation:** Your Majesty

**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 8 June 2007.