

URGENT ACTION

DEATH SENTENCE FOR FLARE FATALITY

A Bahraini man under sentence of death has lodged his final appeal and could be at risk of execution. He was sentenced to death in February 2014 and lost his first appeal in August.

Death row prisoner **Maher Abbas Ahmad** (also known as Maher al-Khabbaz) is waiting for a decision from the Court of Cassation to know whether he is to be executed. He was sentenced to death on 19 February 2014 for the premeditated murder of a police officer with explosive materials while he was at a gathering in Sahla, on the outskirts of the capital, Manama, on 14 February 2013. The High Criminal Court of Appeal rejected his appeal on 31 August. Eight men tried with him had their sentences reduced on appeal to between five and 10 years in prison.

Maher Abbas Ahmad's lawyer complained that the court had accepted as the main evidence against him his "confession" which he said he had made under torture, the statements of some co-defendants who said they had "confessed" under duress, and testimonies of police officers called as witnesses. According to court documents, judges argued they would accept the defendants' "confessions" because they believed the confessions were true and the defendants had sustained their injuries, detailed in forensic reports, when they resisted arrest.

Maher Abbas Ahmad told his lawyer that he had been tortured during the first few days he was detained, while he was being interrogated and this had included being beaten and threatened. During one hearing he told the judge he had been tortured, but no investigation is known to have been launched into Maher Abbas Ahmad's allegations of torture. The case will now go before the Court of Cassation for a final decision. If this appeal fails, the death sentence will pass to the King for final ratification.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Expressing grave concern that Maher Abbas Ahmad's death sentence has been confirmed;
- Acknowledging the Bahraini government's responsibility to protect the public and bring to justice those who commit crimes, but insisting that this should always be done in accordance with international law and Bahrain's international human rights obligations;
- Calling on the authorities to order a retrial where no evidence obtained under torture is used in court;
- Urging His Majesty Shaikh Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa to commute the death sentence imposed on Maher Abbas Ahmad immediately.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 NOVEMBER 2014 TO:

King

Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa
Office of His Majesty the King
P.O. Box 555
Rifa'a Palace, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1766 4587

Salutation: Your Majesty

Prime Minister

Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1753 3033

Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Justice

Shaikh Khaled bin Ali al-Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic
Affairs
P. O. Box 450, Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17531284

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment are recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other international human rights instruments and many national constitutions. Amnesty International believes that the death penalty always violates these rights.

The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in 2007 calling for a moratorium on executions. This means that a large majority of UN member states from all regions of the world are in favour of a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

Bahrain has applied capital punishment only a few times in the past few years. A Bangladeshi national, Russell Mezan, was the last person executed in Bahrain, by firing squad in July 2010. However, since 2011, at least six people have been sentenced to death, although some of the death sentences were quashed on appeal.

Maher Abbas Ahmad was tried with another eight men. Two of them were sentenced to five and six years in prison while the other six were sentenced to life in prison but had this reduced on appeal to 10 years.

Name: Maher Abbas Ahmad

Gender m/f: m

UA: 252/14 Index: MDE 11/034/2014 Issue Date: 7 October 2014

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