

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: MDE 23/005/2005 (Public)
News Service No: 083
4 April 2005

Saudi Arabia: Amnesty International renews calls to end executions immediately

Six Somali nationals were executed in Saudi Arabia today. This brings the total number of those executed in the last four months to at least 51 people including 39 in 2005. Almost two thirds of those executed were foreign nationals.

Four people were also executed on Friday. Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the alarming increase in the rate of executions in Saudi Arabia so far this year and fears that other executions may be carried out in the coming days or weeks.

Earlier on 23 December 2004, Amnesty International issued a statement urging King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to commute all outstanding death sentences after eight men were executed in just one week. With the recent increase in executions, Amnesty International is renewing its calls to King Fahd to end executions and to bring trial proceedings of people facing such punishments in line with international standards.

The secrecy surrounding the criminal judicial system is such that in most cases defendants and their families are not informed of the charges or the progress of legal proceedings against them. An example of this is the case of six Somali men executed earlier today. On 21 February 2005 Amnesty International wrote to the Minister of Interior regarding the status of the six men who Amnesty International feared were being detained despite having served their sentences of imprisonment and corporal punishment. Amnesty International never received a reply to this letter but learnt today that the men had in fact been executed. The six men were unaware that they were at risk of death.

Furthermore, defendants may be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress, torture or deception and trials invariably fall short of international standards for fair trial. Trial proceedings take place behind closed doors, without the defendants being given the right to legal representation, and in the case of foreign nationals, without adequate or no access to consular assistance.

Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of all governments to bring to justice those guilty of recognizably criminal offences. However the organization opposes the death penalty as the ultimate violation of the right to life. The organization is committed to defending all people against the violations of these fundamental and internationally recognized rights.

The organization renews its calls on King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to commute all outstanding death sentences and to bring trial proceedings of people facing such punishments in line with international standards.

Background

Those executed since December last year include 13 Pakistanis, six Somalis, four Filipinos, three Indians, three Thais, five Iraqis, one Afghan, and 16 Saudi Arabian's including one woman.