

# URGENT ACTION

## SHEIKH NIMR AL-NIMR EXECUTED

**Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr was executed on 2 January. His family were not informed, and his body has not been returned to them. He had been sentenced to death after a deeply flawed trial at the counter-terrorism court.**

**Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr** was executed on 2 January, together with 46 other prisoners. The authorities had not told his family that he was about to be executed. They have also so far refused to return his body for burial, despite the family's numerous requests, thereby compounding their suffering. Activists believe the authorities have already buried his body.

The UN Human Rights Committee has emphasized that following an execution "the refusal to hand over the body for burial [may] have the effect of intimidating or punishing families by intentionally leaving them in a state of uncertainty and mental distress."

Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr's death sentence had been upheld first by the appeal division of the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in the capital, Riyadh, and then by the Supreme Court earlier in 2015, without him, his family or his lawyer being told. It is assumed that the King of Saudi Arabia ratified the death sentence some time in 2015.

The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, announced that he "is deeply dismayed over the recent execution by Saudi Arabia of 47 people, including the cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr. Sheikh al-Nimr and a number of the other prisoners executed had been convicted following trials that raised serious concerns over the nature of the charges and the fairness of the process." The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, said that he "deplored the execution of Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr and any other individual who had not committed a crime viewed "as most serious" under international human rights law."

### **Please write immediately in English, Arabic or your own language:**

- Calling on the Saudi Arabian authorities to return Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr's body to his family without delay;
- Urging them to establish an official moratorium on executions immediately, with a view to abolishing the death penalty, and commute all outstanding death sentences;
- Calling on them to ensure that full information about the use of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia is publicly available and that condemned prisoners' families and lawyers are given full access to them and information about their cases, including notification of any scheduled execution.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 MARCH 2016 TO:**

King and Prime Minister  
His Majesty King Salman 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  
Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior)  
+966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)  
Twitter: @KingSalman  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

Minister of Interior  
His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud  
Minister of Interior  
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,  
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**And copies to:**  
President, Human Rights Commission  
Bandar Mohammed 'Abdullah al-Aiban  
Human Rights Commission  
PO Box 58889, Riyadh 11515  
King Fahd Road  
Building No. 3, Riyadh  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Fax: +966 11 418 5101

**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. This is the second update of UA 271/14. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/2749/2015/en/>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, who was the imam of al-Awamiyya mosque in al-Qatif, Eastern Province, was sentenced to death by the SCC on 15 October 2014 for a list of vague charges, evidence for which almost completely came from religious sermons and interviews attributed to him. Amnesty International's review of these texts confirms that he was exercising his right to freedom of expression and was not inciting violence. A number of the charges, including "disobeying the ruler" should not be offences at all, as they criminalize the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression and other human rights. Other charges are vague and have been misused in his case to punish the exercise of human rights.

Throughout the trial, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr was denied adequate access to the court documents and evidence against him. He was also denied access to his lawyer in pre-trial detention and critical periods of the trial, and was not allowed adequate time and facilities to prepare his defence. The court accepted the written testimonies of the officers who had arrested him, but did not allow the Sheikh's defence team to cross-examine them in court, in breach of Saudi Arabian laws. His lawyer was prevented from talking to the media about trial proceedings and was forced to sign a pledge not to share court documents.

Saudi Arabians in the Kingdom's predominantly Shi'a Eastern Province have long complained of discrimination and harassment by the authorities. Inspired in part by protests that swept the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, they organized demonstrations to protest at the harassment, arrest and imprisonment of members of the Shi'a community for such things as celebrating Shi'a religious festivals, breaching restrictions on building Shi'a mosques and religious schools, and expressing support for protesters in Bahrain.

The Saudi Arabian authorities have taken repressive measures against people they suspect of taking part in or supporting protests, or expressing views critical of the state. Protesters have been held without charge and incommunicado for days or weeks at a time, and some have said they were tortured and otherwise ill-treated. The security forces have killed at least 20 people connected with protests in the Eastern Province since 2011, and imprisoned hundreds. Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr is one of seven people sentenced to death in connection with the 2011 and 2012 protests. Of the six others, three were executed on the same day as Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. The remaining three, who were arrested when they were below 18 years of age and have said that they were tortured to make them "confess", are still on death row. One of these three, Ali al-Nimr, is Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr's nephew (See UA 143/14, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/014/2014/en/> and UA 229/15, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/2671/2015/en/>).

Under international human rights law, the death penalty can only be imposed for the "most serious crimes", which has been interpreted by UN experts as referring to crimes that involve "intentional killing".

The death penalty is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty at all times, regardless of who is accused, the crime, their guilt or innocence or method of execution.

Name: Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr  
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 271/14 Index: MDE 23/3250/2016 Issue Date: 20 January 2016