

EXTERNAL

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Death Penalty

26 September 1996

ETHIOPIA **Abdulkarim al-Naji Abdelradi**
al-Arab Sadiq Hafiz
Safwat Hassan Abdelghani

On 20 September 1996, three Egyptian nationals - Abdulkarim al-Naji Abdelradi, al-Arab Sadiq Hafiz and Safwat Hassan Abdelghani - were sentenced to death by the Federal Supreme Court in Addis Ababa. They were convicted of involvement in an attempt to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa on 16 June 1995 during a summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity. They were also convicted of killing two Ethiopian police officers in the same incident.

The trial began in March 1996 and was held *in camera*. The three defendants had legal representation, and now have the right of appeal (cassation) to a different bench of the Federal Supreme Court. If the convictions are upheld, the men may petition the President of Ethiopia for clemency. This process could be swift.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

To Amnesty International's knowledge, there have been no judicial executions in Ethiopia since the overthrow of the Mengistu Haile-Mariam government in 1991, although courts have imposed several death sentences for murder in aggravated circumstances. The new Constitution has retained the death penalty, with the support of the new government. Forty-eight members of the former Dergue military government are currently on trial and facing the death penalty on charges including genocide and crimes against humanity. A further 1,800 former officials held mostly since 1991 are also likely to face the death penalty, although the government has said it favours only a "limited number" of executions of those found guilty of the worst crimes.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing regret that Abdulkarim al-Naji Abdelradi, al-Arab Sadiq Hafiz and Safwat Hassan Abdelghani have been sentenced to death;
- opposing the use of the death penalty in this and all cases on the grounds that it is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and a violation of the right to life;
- appealing for the death sentences, if confirmed on appeal, to be commuted;
- calling on the government to consider carefully the human rights reasons for not using the death penalty and not to take the retrograde step of restarting executions in Ethiopia.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Dr Negaso Gidada
President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Office of the President
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telegrams: President Negaso, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Faxes: +2511 552030
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Meles Zenawi

Prime Minister
Prime Minister's Office
P O Box 1031, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telegrams: Prime Minister Meles, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Faxes: +2511 552030
Salutation: Your Excellency

Mr Mahteme Solomon
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
P O Box 1370, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Telegrams: Justice Minister, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Faxes: +2511 550722
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

- Mr Kemal Bedri, President of the Federal Supreme Court, Federal Supreme Court, P O Box 6166, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, **Fax: +2511 550278**
- Mr Seyoum Mesfin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, P O Box 393, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, **Fax: +2511 514300**

and to diplomatic representatives of ETHIOPIA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 November 1996.