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News Flash

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Nigeria: Sharia appeal court quashes death sentence by stoning

Amnesty International welcomes the decision by the *Sharia* court of appeal in Dutse, Jigawa State, northern Nigeria to dismiss the death sentence by stoning on Sarimu Mohamed Baranda.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty.

The tribunal recognised Sarimu's claims of mental illness and ordered for Sarimu to be admitted in a psychiatric hospital.

Sarimu Mohamed Barand, aged 54, was sentenced to death by stoning in July 2002, under *Sharia Penal Legislations* currently being enforced in northern Nigerian states, for allegedly raping a nine-year-old child in May 2002.

However, Sarimu Mohamed Baranda failed to challenge the sentence within the 30-day mandatory appeal period. His relatives filed an appeal in August 2002 claiming mental illness. On 15 October Sarimu Mohamed Baranda initially confessed the rape but subsequently withdrew his confession claiming that the police beat it out of him.

Background

Many appeals against sentences under *Sharia penal legislations*, including that of Amina Lawal, are pending in northern Nigerian states. After several adjournments, the hearing of Amina Lawal's appeal is due to take place on 27 August 2003 in her home state of Katsina, northern Nigeria.

Amina Lawal -- a Muslim woman -- was found guilty by a court in March 2002 after bearing a child outside marriage. Under *Sharia Penal Legislations* now in force in several northern Nigerian states, this was sufficient for her to be convicted of the crime of adultery and summoned to appear before a Sharia tribunal to respond to a "crime" which now carries a punishment of death by stoning according to new *Sharia penal legislations* introduced in Nigeria in 1999.

Public Document

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