

PUBLIC

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Death Penalty

6 March 2001

EGYPT

Sa'diya Salem Muhammad 'Abd al-'Al (f), aged 21
Ahmad Muhammad Mustafa Ahmad, aged 23

A woman and her lover have been sentenced to death and are at risk of execution. The sentence has been sent to the religious authorities for approval.

Sa'diya Salem Muhammad 'Abd al-'Al reportedly conspired with her lover, Ahmad Muhammad Mustafa Ahmad, to murder her husband who had apparently refused to divorce her.

On 27 February Giza Criminal Court submitted the death sentences to the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in Egypt. If he gives his approval, as expected, the court is expected to pronounce the death sentences on 25 March.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Egyptian courts have increased their use of the death penalty in the last few years. Last year dozens of people were sentenced to death, and at least 22 were executed. Among those executed were six women. The death penalty is applied for criminal offences such as drug use or trafficking, murder and offences related to "terrorism".

Death sentences handed down by criminal courts have to be submitted to the *Mufti* for approval as a routine measure, where the majority are approved. They are then passed to the President of the Republic or his nominee for ratification. Appeals against final verdicts by criminal courts can be submitted to the Court of Cassation, but only on the grounds of procedural irregularities in the trial.

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

- acknowledging that Sa'diya Salem Muhammad 'Abd al-'Al and Ahmad Muhammad Mustafa Ahmad have been convicted of a terrible crime;
- explaining, however, that you are opposed to the death penalty in all cases, as a violation of the right to life (set out in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person"), which has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments, and is brutalizing to all involved in its application;
- urging the *Mufti* not to approve the death sentences;
- urging the President to use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute this and all other outstanding death sentences;
- drawing attention to the world trend towards abolishing or reducing the use of the death penalty, in accordance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a state party.

APPEALS TO:

M. Farid Nasr Wassel
Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Wakf Ministry
Sabri Abou Alam Street
Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt

Faxes: + 202 3926 155 (If somebody picks up the phone, please ask them to turn the fax machine on)

E-mails: mawkaf@idscl.gov.eg

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt

Telexes: 93794 WAZRA UN

Faxes: + 202 390 1998

e-mails: webmaster@presidency.gov.eg

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Ms Shadia Farag

The Human Rights Department

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt

Faxes: + 202 574 9533

Dr Fathi Sorour

Speaker

The People's Assembly

Magles al-Sha'ab Street, Cairo, Egypt

Faxes: + 202 574 9175

and to diplomatic representatives of Egypt accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 April 2001.