

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 61/97

Death Penalty

30 April 1997

EGYPT Fathiya Salem (f)

Fathiya Salem was sentenced to death by the Giza Criminal Court on 27 April 1997 after having been found guilty of murder. The sentence has been passed on to the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in the country, for approval.

This brings the number of people sentenced to death in Egypt in 1997, as recorded by Amnesty International, to 15. Three people, sentenced to death in previous years, have been executed in 1997.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is applied in Egypt for criminal offences such as drug use or trafficking and murder. Dozens of people have been sentenced to death in Egypt for such crimes. It is also applied for offences related to "terrorism".

The death penalty has been increasingly used in such cases since President Hosni Mubarak began issuing special decrees referring civilians to be tried by military courts in October 1992. Seventy-four death sentences have been passed by military courts since that date and 54 executions have been carried out.

Death sentences in criminal cases are submitted to the *Mufti* for approval. This is a routine measure, as he approves the vast majority of them. They are then passed on to the President or his nominee for ratification. Final verdicts by criminal courts can be appealed against before the Court of Cassation only when it can be proved that there were procedural irregularities in the trial. The death sentences issued by military courts are subject to ratification by the President of the Republic, and then review by the Military Appeals Bureau, also headed by the President of the Republic.

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

- acknowledging the seriousness of the crime for which Fathiya Salem was convicted, but explaining your opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life, pointing out that it has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect and is brutalizing to all involved in its application;
- urging the President to use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute this and all other pending death sentences;
- drawing attention to world trends to abolish or reduce 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:

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

Telegrams: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt

Telexes: 93794 WAZRA UN

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

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Speaker
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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 28 May 1997.