

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 12/21/96

UA 210/96

Death sentences / Execution

22 August 1996

EGYPT 'Eid Sayyid Ahmad, fisherman
'Ali al-Sayyid 'Ali Mabrouk, unemployed

Rabi' Ragab Shahhata

In two separate cases, 'Eid Sayyid Ahmad and 'Ali al-Sayyid 'Ali Mabrouk were sentenced to death by the Giza criminal court on 11 and 16 August 1996 respectively, after having been found guilty of murder. To Amnesty International's knowledge, 32 people have now been sentenced to death in Egypt in 1996.

A third man, Rabi' Ragab Shahhata, was executed in Minya prison on 8 August. He had been sentenced to death by a criminal court in Bani Sueif in 1994, after being convicted of rape and murder. He is the thirteenth person, including seven sentenced to death in previous years, to have been executed during 1996.

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 applied in such cases since President Hosni Mubarak began issuing special decrees referring civilians to be tried by military courts in October 1992: 70 death sentences have been passed by military courts since that date and 54 executions have now been carried out.

Death sentences in criminal cases are submitted to the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in the country, 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. 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/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- expressing concern that 'Eid Sayyid Ahmad and 'Ali al-Sayyid 'Ali Mabrouk have been sentenced to death and urging the President to use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute these and all other pending death sentences;
- expressing dismay at the execution of Rabi' Ragab Shahhata;
- acknowledging the seriousness of the crimes for which the three people were convicted, and the right of governments to bring criminals to justice, but pointing out that here is no evidence that the death penalty is an effective deterrent to such crimes;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of violent crime and their families, but explaining your opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the most extreme form of cruel and inhuman punishment;
- expressing concern at the upsurge in the use of the death penalty in Egypt, 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:

Ms Nayla Gabr
The Human Rights Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: (20 2) 574 7839

Dr Fathi Sorour
Speaker
The People's Assembly
Magles al-Sha'ab Street, Cairo, Egypt

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 5 October 1996.