

EXTERNAL

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Death Penalty / Legal concern

12 March 1997

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY Kheireddin al-Bheisi
 Faras al-Bheisi
 Mohammad al-Bheisi

On 6 March 1997 the above-named Palestinians were sentenced to death. They were tried in the State Security Court in a pre-dawn trial and found guilty of involvement in the murder of Ismail Hasuna, an officer in the Preventive Security Service.

Kheireddin and Faras al-Bheisi are members of the Palestinian police and the National Security Service and Mohammad al-Bheisi is a civilian.

Ten members of the al-Bheisi family were arrested hours after the murder of Ismail Hasuna on 4 March 1997 and the trial, which was convened 36 hours later in Gaza City, passed sentence in a single session. The seven others not sentenced to death were given prison sentences.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There have been 15 death sentences (including the above) imposed since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in May 1994. Two death sentences have been commuted. None have been carried out.

Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of authorities to bring to justice those who have committed crimes. However, the organization opposes the death penalty without reservation as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

Amnesty International has also long been concerned that State Security Court trials are unfair and that internationally recognized guarantees of fairness are not adhered to.

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

- stating that Amnesty International does not condone crimes of violence, but opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life;
- urging that the death sentences passed on Kheireddin al-Bheisi, Faras al-Bheisi and Mohammad al-Bheisi be commuted;
- urging the Palestinian Authority, following world trends against the death penalty, to abolish the death penalty and ensure that any new penal code excludes the death penalty as a punishment for both civilians and military;
- urging that Kheireddin al-Bheisi, Faras al-Bheisi, Mohammad al-Bheisi and their fellow accused are tried in a proper court of law in accordance with internationally accepted standards for fair trial.

APPEALS TO:

President Yasser Arafat
Palestinian Authority
Al-Muntada

Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Faxes: +972 7 822 365 (ask to send a fax)

Telegrams: President Arafat, Palestinian Authority, Gaza

Salutation: Dear President Arafat

Khaled al-Qidreh
Attorney-General
Attorney-General Building
Yarmouk, Gaza, Palestinian Authority

Faxes: +972 7 824 503

Telegrams: Attorney General, Palestinian Authority, Gaza

Salutation: Dear Mr al-Qidreh

COPIES TO:

Dr Iyad al-Sarraj
The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights
PO Box 54627
Jerusalem Via Israel
Fax: +972 2 99 87536

and to diplomatic representatives of the Palestinian Authority accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 April 1997.