

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 96/95 (MDE 23/01/95, 20 April 1995) - Alarming Increase in Number of Executions

SAUDI ARABIA	Muhammad Jamal `ALI)	
	`Abd al-Qadir Muhammad MUQTAR)	
	Faqay Haji CUSMAN)	
	Sali Id Farah YACQUB)	Somali nationals
	Muhammad Nur MUHAMMAD)	
	Muhammad Abu `Abd al-Qadir ADE)	
	`Abd al-`Aziz Muhammad ISSE)	

"We apply the laws of God and don't pay attention to whoever says anything about that". This is reported (Reuters, 27 April 1995) to have been the Saudi Arabian Interior Minister's reply to reporters' questions about Amnesty International's Urgent Action of 20 April which expressed the organization's concern about the sharply rising number of executions in Saudi Arabia, and about the fate of the seven Somalis named above, reported to be on death row there.

In an earlier Reuters report, dated 21 April, the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to London, Dr Ghazi A. al-Gosaibi, is quoted as saying, also in response to the Urgent Action, that the recent sharp increase in the number of executions was due to an increase in drug trafficking offences. This explanation was also given by the Saudi Arabian Government in 1987 when it introduced the death penalty for drug trafficking for the first time. The number of people executed for such offences has since been steadily increasing and has accelerated alarmingly in 1995. This situation reinforces the evidence that the death penalty is not an effective means to combat crime.

The Ambassador was also quoted as saying that "while one appreciates the idealistic motivations of Amnesty, one is struck by the organization's total insensitivity towards the religious beliefs of societies with different value systems, and its total disregard for the plight of the victims and their families".

Amnesty International takes no position on religious beliefs. The organization works for the protection of the right to life for everyone, irrespective of their ethnic origin, colour, sex, language, religious or political beliefs. Amnesty International recognizes the right of states to bring criminals to justice but does not believe that the use of the death penalty is an effective means to combat crimes.

However, neither the Minister of Interior nor the Ambassador provided any clarification as to why prisoners facing the death penalty are denied the right to be defended by a lawyer or why confessions, even when obtained under torture are apparently accepted by the courts as evidence, and may be the sole evidence on which a conviction is based. In addition, the Ambassador failed to provide any clarification regarding the seven Somali nationals reported to have been sentenced to death in 1994 for crimes which they allegedly did not commit. In one case, that of `Abd al-`Aziz Muhammad ISSE, the crime of which he was found guilty is said to have occurred before his arrival in Saudi Arabia from Somalia.

Although this information is obtainable from the airport of his arrival in Saudi Arabia, it was apparently not taken into account during his trial. The other six Somalis are: Muhammad Jamal `ALI, `Abd al-Qadir Muhammad MUQTAR, Faqay Haji CUSMAN, Sali Id Farah YACQUB, Muhammad Nur MUHAMMAD, Muhammad Abu `Abd al-Qadir ADE. They are all reported to have been held in Priman and Ruwais Prisons in

Jeddah in 1994. Amnesty International has sought clarification of these cases from the Saudi Arabian Minister of Justice but has not received a response.

In light of the above officials' statements, Amnesty International remains gravely concerned about the fate of the seven Somalis and the alarming increase in the number of executions in 1995 which marks an acceleration in a continuing upsurge in executions since the beginning of this decade.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia retains the death penalty for a wide range of offences. These include murder, rape and other sexual offences, apostasy, drug smuggling, and acts of sabotage. For more details on the death penalty and executions in Saudi Arabia see Amnesty International report, *Saudi Arabia: An upsurge in public executions*, MDE 23/04/93, 15 May 1993.

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

- calling for clarification of reports that Muhammad Jamal `ALI, `Abd al-Qadir Muhammad MUQTAR, Faqay Haji CUSMAN, Sali Id Farah YACQUB, Muhammad Nur MUHAMMAD, Muhammad Abu `Abd al-Qadir ADE and `Abd al-`Aziz Muhammad ISSE are on death row and if this is the case urging that their death sentences be commuted;
- in view of reported comments by the Saudi Arabian Interior Minister and its Ambassador to London, explaining Amnesty International's unconditional opposition to the death penalty, and that its campaign to abolish it worldwide is based on the right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and pointing out that there is no evidence that the death penalty acts as an effective deterrent to crime;
- reiterating grave concern about the alarming increase in the number of executions in Saudi Arabia and calling for a halt to such executions;
- urging that international safeguards for defendants charged with capital offences are strictly observed during trials.

APPEALS TO

His Royal Highness
 Prince Naif bin 'Abdul-'Aziz
 Minister of the Interior
 Ministry of the Interior
 PO Box 2833, Airport Road
 Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Minister of the Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 404416
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

His Royal Highness
 Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
 Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Nasseriya Street, Riyadh 11124
 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 405000
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

His Excellency
 Dr `Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh

Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 405 9443
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 June 1995.