

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 23/03/92  
Distrib: PG/SC

Date: 15 June 1992

*@MEDICAL CONCERN*

**Abdullah Abbas**  
**£SAUDI ARABIA**

Abdullah Abbas was a 39-year-old Ghanaian national who is reported to have died on 18 April 1992 after some two weeks in detention. He is reported to have been arrested in Jeddah as an illegal resident on 2 April 1992, having entered the country in January 1992 with a six-week visa. He is believed to have been without medical attention during his detention although in a very serious state of health, and appears to have been transferred to hospital just shortly before his death. Death was recorded as cardiac and respiratory failure due to meningitis.

Others who saw Abdullah Abbas in the deportation centre said that there were indications that he had been ill-treated by the immigration authorities, stating that his legs and other parts of his body were swollen and that he appeared to have been beaten. He is described as having been in a state of stupor throughout most of his time in the detention centre, unable to move, rouse himself or attend to any of his own needs. He appears to have been unable to take adequate nutrition, capable only occasionally of taking water and liquid food given by others, and on other days taking nothing. He is also said to have been unable to speak for most of the time. One detainee described him as having "lock jaw", although this may have been a reference to his inability to speak or to take food normally. Detainees who helped him in the centre, washing and feeding him, noted that his urine was blood-stained and that there was a skin eruption between his buttocks.

No attempt appears to have been made to provide him with medical attention until shortly before his death, although the immigration authorities must have been aware of his state of health. On 11 April 1992, one week before his death, he is reported to have been taken to Jeddah airport for deportation, but to have been returned from the airport to the detention centre due to ill-health.

A group of detainees at the deportation centre eventually succeeded in persuading a duty officer of the need to transfer Abdullah Abbas to hospital; by the time he was removed from the detention centre he is said to have had difficulty in breathing. The exact timing of his transfer to hospital is not known, but from information available it is believed that it may only have been a matter of hours before his death.

A death certificate dated 3 May 1992 gives the time and place of death as 10.50 a.m. on 18 April 1992 at King Fahd Hospital, Jeddah. Amnesty International is seeking clarification about the circumstances surrounding his death and the reasons why no attempt appears to have been made to provide him with medical care when his precarious state of health was first apparent.

Abdullah Abbas was married with six children.

INTERNAL

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To: Medical professionals  
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Middle East  
Date: 15 June 1992

### *MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION*

**Abdullah Abbas  
SAUDI ARABIA**

#### **Keywords**

Theme: Death following detention/ medical care

#### **Summary**

Abdullah Abbas, a 39-year-old Ghanaian national is reported to have died in King Fahd Hospital, Jeddah, on 18 April 1992 shortly after admission from Jeddah deportation centre where he had been detained for approximately two weeks. The cause of death was given as meningitis. He appears to have received no medical care in the centre prior to his hospitalization although he is said to have been seriously ill for some time. There are in addition suggestions that he had been subjected to ill-treatment by immigration officers.

#### **Recommended actions**

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the authorities listed below

- raising the case of Abdullah Abbas, who died in King Fahd hospital 16 days after his arrest, noting that he is reported to have died as a result of meningitis
- expressing concern at reports that he was seriously ill throughout the two weeks he spent at Jeddah deportation centre, unable to move, speak or feed normally, but that no medical attention was provided at the centre
- noting that the failure to provide prompt and regular medical attention to a detainee violates the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and also Principles 24 and 26 of the United Nations Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment. Principle 24 of the UN Body of Principles states: "A proper medical examination shall be offered to a detained or imprisoned person as promptly as possible after his admission to the place of detention or imprisonment, and thereafter medical care and treatment shall be provided whenever necessary."

- noting that there have been suggestions that Abdullah Abbas was beaten and ill-treated at the time of his arrest; calling for an independent and impartial inquiry into the circumstances of his death and for the findings of this inquiry to be made public

### **Addresses**

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