

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 43/97

Fear of increase in executions

25 March 1997

SAUDI ARABIA

Sarah Dematera, Filipino  
and others on death row in Saudi Arabia

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Amnesty International is concerned that 11 people have been executed in the past four days, bringing the total number of executions in Saudi Arabia so far this year to 16. All 16 were reportedly convicted of murder, armed robbery or drug trafficking. No information was made public about their trials and conviction as it is a practice in Saudi Arabia only to announce executions once they have been carried out.

Amnesty International fears that this may be the start of a planned series of executions of people currently on death row. A similar spate of executions at the beginning of 1995 resulted in at least 192 people being executed by October of that year. Amnesty International does not know the exact number of prisoners on death row. Unconfirmed reports suggest that Sarah Dematera, a Filipino national, is currently on death row. She was reportedly convicted of the murder of her employer in 1992. Her execution has been suspended until the victim's oldest child reaches the age of 18 and decides whether to accept blood money instead of her execution. Amnesty International sought clarification of her case but has not received any response from the Saudi Arabian Government.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Executions have been increasing at an alarming rate in Saudi Arabia in recent years and a large number of people are believed to be on death row. Executions are invariably carried out after trials in which internationally agreed safeguards for prisoners facing the death penalty are completely disregarded. Defendants are not allowed to be defended by lawyers during trial hearings, and confessions, even when obtained under torture, are accepted by the courts as evidence, and may be the sole evidence on which conviction is based. More information on the use of the death penalty and executions in Saudi Arabia is provided in Amnesty International's Urgent Actions issued over recent years, particularly those issued during 1995.

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

- expressing grave concern at the 11 executions carried out in Saudi Arabia between 21 and 24 March 1997, and calling for a halt to further executions;
- seeking clarification of the current status of Sarah Dematera, and urging commutation of her sentence if she is still facing execution;
- calling on the Saudi Arabian Government to commute to a more humane punishment the death sentences of all other prisoners currently on death row;
- pointing to the international trend towards abolition of the death penalty;
- acknowledging the responsibility of governments to punish those responsible for crime, but pointing out that studies have shown the death penalty to be no more effective as a deterrent than any other punishment.

#### APPEALS TO:

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines  
His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul-'Aziz  
Office of H.M. The King  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Telegrams: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

Minister of Interior

His Royal Highness  
Prince Naif bin 'Abdul-'Aziz  
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**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness  
Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz  
Nasseriya Street, Riyadh 11124  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Telegrams: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Telexes: 405000**  
**Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

Minister of Justice

His Excellency  
Dr. Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh  
Ministry of Justice  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**  
**Telexes: 405 980 MINJUS SJ**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES 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 22 April 1997.