

EXTERNAL

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Execution / Flogging / Legal concern

15 August 1995

SAUDI ARABIA 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf
Ibrahim 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf
Dr Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf, university lecturer
Dr Muhsin Hussain al-'Awaji, university lecturer
Naser Ibrahim al-Barak
'Abd al-Rahman 'Ali al-Hudhayf
Salih Mansur al-Barak
Khalid 'Abdallah Salih al-Yahya
Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Suwaylem
Sultan 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Khamis

One man is officially reported to have been executed and another sentenced to be flogged after a trial of ten political prisoners held behind closed doors in Saudi Arabia. The case has further heightened Amnesty International's fears for up to 200 other political detainees believed to be currently detained without charge or trial.

A statement by the Ministry of Interior announced that 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf, in his thirties, was executed on 12 August 1995 in Riyadh. It said that he had been sentenced to death after he was found guilty of attacking a security officer with acid and of having links with the leaders of the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), an organization based in London and banned in Saudi Arabia.

Amnesty International received reports in June that 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf had been sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment on the same charges by a court in Riyadh. The organization does not know how his prison sentence was increased to the death penalty as the trial has been, and remains, shrouded in secrecy. He had had no access to defence lawyers or any legal assistance since his arrest, possibly in November 1994. He is also said to have been denied family visits and his body has apparently not been returned to his family.

Nine other political prisoners were sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to 18 years. Four were convicted of participating in the planning of the attack on the security officer and of membership of the CDLR. One of them, Ibrahim 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf, has been sentenced to 300 lashes in addition to 18 years' imprisonment. The other three, Dr Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf, Naser Ibrahim al-Barak and Dr Muhsin Hussain al-'Awaji received 15 years' imprisonment each.

Two of the remaining five prisoners, 'Abd al-Rahman 'Ali al-Hudhayf and Salih Mansur al-Barak, were convicted of providing refuge for 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf and were respectively sentenced to eight and five years' imprisonment. The other three were convicted on various charges which included assisting 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf in his aborted attempt to leave Saudi Arabia secretly and holding meetings for the CDLR and receiving its leaflets. Two of these, Khalid 'Abdallah Salih al-Yahya and Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz Suwaylem, were sentenced to five years' imprisonment each. The other prisoner, Sultan 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Khamis, received three years' imprisonment.

The Ministry of Interior's statement concluded with the warning that "...such will be the fate of anyone who breaches any aspect of our religion...or endanger the security enjoyed by this country...". Amnesty International believes that the ten men have been punished for their political dissent rather than the

criminal charge of injuries caused to the security officer. As such, some of them may be prisoners of conscience.

The ten are among hundreds of political suspects subjected to arrest and detention since 1994. Most were held for short periods before being released.

However, about 200, including the above ten, remained in detention. Most of those currently held are reported to be detained without charge or trial and without access to any legal assistance to challenge the lawfulness of their detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The execution of 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf brings the total number of executions in Saudi Arabia recorded by Amnesty International during the last seven months to 141. Such executions are invariably carried out after trials in which internationally agreed safeguards for prisoners facing the death penalty are completely ignored. Defendants are not allowed to be defended by a lawyer, and confessions, even when obtained under torture, are accepted by the court as evidence, and may be the sole evidence on which conviction is obtained. Five Somali nationals convicted under such procedures are reported to be currently on death row (see UA 96/95, MDE 23/01/95, 20 April 1995).

Amnesty International considers the judicial punishment of flogging to be a contrary to Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states "no-one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". An Egyptian worker in Saudi Arabia is recently reported to have been sentenced to 4,000 lashes (see UA 190/95, MDE 23/04/95, 1 August 1995).

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

- expressing deep regret at the execution of 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf on 12 August, and seeking clarification as to why his earlier sentence of 20 years' imprisonment was increased to the death sentence;
- calling for the cruel and inhuman punishment of flogging imposed on Ibrahim 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hudhayf to be immediately commuted;
- stating that all ten defendants have been sentenced after a trial which did not conform to international standards, and calling for them to be retried in accordance with these standards or released;
- calling for other political suspects who continue to be held without trial, to be immediately released if they are not to be charged with recognizably criminal offences and fairly tried in accordance with international standards, seeking assurances that neither the death penalty nor corporal punishment will be imposed on any of them.

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

His Royal Highness
Prince Naif bin 'Abdul-'Aziz
Minister of the Interior
PO Box 2833, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Minister of the Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Telexes: 404416

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

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 3 October 1995.