

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Saudi Arabia: Amnesty International appeals to armed group for the safety and release of Paul M. Johnson

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at threats reportedly issued by an armed group, said to be affiliated to al-Qa'ida, to kill US national Paul Marshal Johnson, a 49-year-old aeronautics engineer. Paul Marshal Johnson is said to have been kidnapped by gunmen in Riyadh on 12 June 2004 and his whereabouts have since been unknown. The armed group said to have given an ultimatum to the Saudi Arabian authorities to release some prisoners held by its security forces by Friday 18 June 2004, or it would carry out the killing of Paul Marshal Johnson. The government has stated that al-Qai'ida is responsible for kidnapping Paul Marshal Johnson and taking him hostage.

The taking and killing of hostages is prohibited under principles of international law. Amnesty International calls on government forces and armed groups to comply with these principles in all circumstances. In particular these principles prohibit violence to life and person and murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture.

Amnesty International therefore urges the armed group holding Paul Marshal Johnson to ensure his safety and release him to return to his family.