

URGENT ACTION

EXECUTIONS OF SEVEN MEN POSTPONED

Seven Saudi Arabian men have had their executions postponed (they were originally scheduled for 5 March). They could be executed as early as next week.

In August 2009, the General Court in the south-western town of Abha, Saudi Arabia, found seven men (all in their 20s) guilty of an armed robbery that took place in January 2006. One man, **Sarhan bin Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mashayekh**, was sentenced to death and in addition "crucifixion". The other six – **Sa'id bin Hassan bin Ahmed al-Amri**, **Ali bin Muhammad bin Hazam al-Shihri**, **Nasser bin Sa'id bin Sa'ad al-Qahtani**, **Sa'id bin Nasser bin Muhammad al-Shahrani**, **Abdul Aziz bin Saleh bin Muhammad al-Amri** and **Ali bin Hadi bin Sa'id al-Qahtani** – are also to be executed. The trial of all of them lasted only a few hours, and they were denied both legal representation and the opportunity to appeal. Security officers present at the trial apparently warned them that if they withdrew their "confessions" they would be tortured again and members of their families would be brought to prison and tortured in front of them.

The men were arrested in 2005 and 2006. They were said to have been severely beaten, denied food and water, deprived of sleep, forced to remain standing for 24 hours and then forced to sign "confessions" during their interrogation at the Criminal Investigation Department in Abha. They were detained for over three years in General Prison in Abha before they went on trial. Two men are possible juvenile offenders. Ali bin Muhammad bin Hazam al-Shihri would have been aged around 16 at the time of the alleged offence; Sa'id bin Nasser bin Muhammad al-Shahrani may also have been under 18. They were believed to have been held in the juvenile section of the prison and later transferred to the adult ward.

Please write immediately to the Saudi Arabian authorities in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Welcoming the temporary halt in executions of the seven men, but calling on the authorities to prevent the imposition of the death penalty against any of them;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that the seven men receive a new trial that fully meets the international standards for fair trial, without recourse to the death penalty,
- Reminding them of Saudi Arabia's obligations as a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits the use of the death penalty on individuals aged under 18 at the time of the alleged crime, and of the right of defendants to be presumed to have been under the age of majority at the time of the alleged crime, when in doubt;
- Calling on the authorities to investigate the seven men's allegations of torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 APRIL 2013 TO:

King and Prime Minister

King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques
Office of His Majesty the King
Royal Court, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior)
+966 1 403 3125 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed
bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 1 403 3125 (please keep
trying)

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

And copies to:

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Shaykh Dr Mohammed
bin Abdulkareem Al-Issa
Ministry of Justice
University Street
Riyadh 11137
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 401 1741/ +966 1 402 0311

Salutation: His Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 58/13. Further information:
<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/008/2013/en>

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia has one of the highest rates of execution in the world: it put to death at least 1,938 people between 1985 and 2012. At least 17 people are known to have been executed so far this year.

Saudi Arabia is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which expressly prohibits the execution of juvenile offenders – those convicted of crimes committed when they were under 18. However, Saudi Arabia continues to sentence to death and execute people for crimes committed when they were under 18, in breach of its obligations under the CRC. In January 2013 for instance, a Sri Lankan domestic worker was executed for a crime she allegedly committed when she was under the age of 18.

UN Human Rights Council resolution 19/37 of 23 March 2012 on Rights of the Child, urges states “to presume children alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed the criminal law to be under the age of majority when their age is in doubt until such an assumption is rebutted by the prosecution, and to treat the accused as a juvenile if the burden is not met.”

The authorities apply the death penalty for a wide range of offences that do not meet the minimum international standards for capital punishment; these include armed robbery and drug smuggling, as well as “offences” such as apostasy that should not even be criminalized under international standards.

Those who are executed are usually beheaded, often in public. The dead body is in some cases “crucified”, whereby the upper body, along with the separated head if beheaded, is tied to a pole in a public square to act as a deterrent.

Court proceedings in Saudi Arabia fall far short of international standards for fair trial. Defendants are rarely allowed formal representation by lawyers, and in many cases are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. They may be convicted solely on the basis of “confessions” obtained under duress or deception.

Under the UN Safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, there should be adequate opportunity for defence and appeal, and the imposition of the death penalty should be prohibited when there is room for alternative interpretation of the evidence.

The Saudi Arabian security forces use torture and other ill-treatment with impunity to extract “confessions”. They commonly use methods including sleep deprivation, punching, beating with sticks, suspension from the ceiling, and electric shocks. Saudi Arabia is a state party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which prohibits torture and other ill-treatment as well as the use of evidence extracted under torture or other ill-treatment.

Amnesty International highlighted Saudi Arabia’s extensive use of the death penalty in a report published in 2008, *Affront to Justice: Death Penalty in Saudi Arabia* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/mde23/027/2008>).

Names: Sarhan bin Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mashayekh, Sa’id bin Hassan bin Ahmed al-‘Amri, Ali bin Muhammad bin Hazam al-Shihri, Nasser bin Sa’id bin Sa’ad al-Qahtani, Sa’id bin Nasser bin Muhammad al-Shahrani, Abdul Aziz bin Saleh bin Muhammad al-‘Amri, and Ali bin Hadi bin Sa’id al-Qahtani.

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 58/13 Index: MDE 23/009/2013 Issue Date: 5 March 2013