

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 23/011/2001

UA 207/01

Risk of execution/Legal
and Torture concerns

16 August 2001

SAUDI ARABIA Jamie Patrick Lee, British national (m)
James Cottle, British national (m)
Les Walker, British national (m) and others

The three men named above risk being sentenced to death and executed after they "confessed" on television to carrying out three bombings in Riyadh and al-Khobar between December 2000 and March 2001. They have not been charged with a recognizably criminal offence and it has not been announced when their trial will begin.

On 13 August, the Minister of the Interior, Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz, announced on Saudi Arabian television that Jamie Patrick Lee, James Cottle and Les Walker were under arrest and had "confessed" to the bombings in which several people were injured. The announcement was followed by film footage of the three men making their alleged confession.

All three were arrested some months before they appeared on television. As far as Amnesty International is aware, they have been allowed access to the British consulate and at least man has been visited by family members, but none have been granted any legal assistance.

Amnesty International considers that the televised "confession" implies their guilt before any trial has taken place, and as such is a breach of Article 11(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which states that "Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees for his defence."

Amnesty International believes that at least 17 others, possibly more, are held without charge or trial in connection with the bombings.

BACKGROUND

Detainees in Saudi Arabia are routinely denied the right to be formally represented by lawyers during their trial hearings. Confessions, obtained as a result of torture, may be accepted by the courts as evidence, and may be the sole evidence on which a conviction is based. In 1996, four Saudi Arabian nationals were shown on Saudi Arabian television in similar circumstances "confessing" to the bombing of the Saudi Arabian National Guard training centre in Riyadh in November 1995. On the same day, Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz announced that the four would be tried and punished in accordance with the law, suggesting that the four had not yet been tried. They were executed 40 days later (see EXTRA 80/96 (MDE 23/04/96, 28 May 1996, and MDE 23/06/96 31 May 1996).

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals in English, Arabic or your own language:

- asking what charges Jamie Patrick Lee, James Cottle and Les Walker face and why they are still in custody;
- asking to be told the names of all the others detained in connection with the bombings, the charges against them and where they are held;
- urging that all detainees be granted immediate access to legal assistance and that they be granted medical care as and when necessary, as well as regular consular access and unhindered family visits;
- urging that the 1984 UN Safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of prisoners facing the death penalty must be adhered to immediately;
- reminding the authorities of their obligations under the UDHR as well as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), to which Saudi Arabia is a state party.

APPEALS TO:

King and Prime Minister, The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines
His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud
Office of H.M. The King, Royal Court, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
Salutation: Your Majesty.

Minister of the Interior, His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior
P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road, Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 403 1185
Telegram: Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice
His Excellency Dr. 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, University Street, Riyadh 11137,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 401 1741
Telegram: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
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 27 September 2001.