

PUBLIC

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Incommunicado Detention / Fear of Torture/III-Treatment /
Fear of Death Sentence

18 November 2003

SAUDI ARABIA Faisal Naji al-Balawi (m), 29

Faisal Naji al-Balawi, a Saudi Arabian national, is being held incommunicado at an unknown place of detention and may be at risk of torture and ill-treatment. He also faces a possible death sentence.

According to press reports, Faisal Naji al-Balawi was handed over by Jordan to Saudi Arabia in connection with the hijacking of Saudi Arabian Airlines flight 115 on 14 October 2000. He reportedly hijacked the plane along with a second man, Aish Ali al-Faradi, during its journey from Jeddah to London. The flight was forced to land at Baghdad airport in Iraq and all passengers were unharmed. The two men reportedly said that they had hijacked the plane in attempt to flee Saudi Arabia and bring international attention to the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia. The whereabouts of Aish Ali al-Faradi is unknown to Amnesty International.

Prince Naif bin >Abdul >Aziz, Minister of the Interior, reportedly stated during a press conference on 16 November that Faisal Naji al-Balawi was in police custody and was "handed over by Jordan in accordance with security agreements and is being questioned".

Hijacking is a capital offence in Saudi Arabia and Amnesty International is concerned that Faisal Naji al-Balawi is at risk of being sentenced to death after an unfair trial.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offences including hijacking. Sentencing occurs after trials which fall far short of internationally agreed standards and are held behind closed doors. Defendants do not have the right to formal representation by a lawyer and in many cases, defendants and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Defendants may also be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress, torture or deception.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- recognizing the rights and responsibilities of the Saudi Arabian government to bring to justice anyone suspected of an internationally recognizable criminal offence, such as hijacking;
- expressing concern for the safety of Faisal Naji al-Balawi, who has been handed over to Saudi Arabia in connection with the hijacking of Saudi Arabian Airlines flight 115 on 14 October 2000;
- seeking assurances that Faisal Naji al-Balawi is treated humanely in detention, protected from torture and granted regular access to legal assistance, family and medical assistance if necessary;
- seeking clarification of the exact charges against Faisal Naji al-Balawi and his place of detention;
- stating that you are opposed to the death penalty in all cases, considering it be a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

APPEALS TO:

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

Telegram: Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 403 1185 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)
Telex: 404416
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin >Abdul >Aziz Al-Saud,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Nasseriya Street,
Riyadh 11124, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegram: Foreign Affairs Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 403 0159 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)
Telex: 405000
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

Telegram: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 401 1741
Telex: 405 980 MINJUS SJ
Salutation: Your Excellency

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

Telegram: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Salutation: Your Majesty

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 30 December 2003.