

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 23/16/97

7 November 1997

Further information on EXTRA 43/97 (MDE 23/03/97, 25 March 1997) and follow-ups (MDE 23/04/97, 23 May and MDE 23/06/97, 3 July) - Fear of increase in executions

SAUDI ARABIA21 Pakistani nationals, including women and children

It was reported on 6 November 1997 that an unspecified number of Pakistani children arrested in Saudi Arabia for drug offences have been released. It is thought that the children referred to are the seven who were among 21 Pakistani nationals arrested in January 1997.

Secrecy continues to surround the rest of the group of Pakistani nationals, believed to consist of 10 women and four men, who remain in detention on charges of drug smuggling, an offence punishable by death in Saudi Arabia.

Amnesty International has been appealing to the Saudi Arabian Government to clarify the legal status of the prisoners, but has received no response. In August 1997, the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Pakistan issued a statement announcing that the case was still under investigation and no sentences had been passed or carried out.

The detainees are not known to have been allowed access to lawyers or provided with any legal assistance, which is generally the practice in Saudi Arabia even when the charges carry the death penalty. They are said to be detained in Briman Prison in Jeddeh and reported to have been allowed only one visit by a Pakistani consulate official since their arrest.

Amnesty International remains concerned that those charged are very likely to receive an unfair trial and could be sentenced to death and executed. Amnesty International's fear is heightened by the fact that executions for drug offences after secret trials have increased alarmingly in Saudi Arabia in recent years. Most of the victims have been foreign workers from poor countries, particularly Pakistani nationals.

At least 118 people have been executed in Saudi Arabia so far this year, 54 of whom had been convicted of drug offences. Of the 118 victims, 23 were Pakistani nationals.

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

- welcoming the release of the Pakistani children;
- expressing concern that although the rest of the group are understood to have been charged with an offence which carries the death penalty they are being denied the right to fair trial as required by international standards and urging that they be given immediate access to legal representation;
- urging that the death penalty not be invoked against the defendants;
- expressing alarm at the continuing high numbers of executions being carried out in Saudi Arabia, and urging that no more executions be carried out and that all outstanding death sentences be commuted to a more humane punishment.

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

Minister of Interior

His Royal Highness
Prince Naif bin 'Abdul-'Aziz
Ministry of the Interior
PO Box 2833
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Minister of the Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 404416
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness
Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Nasseriya Street, Riyadh 11124
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 405000
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency
Dr. Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Ministry of Justice
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 403970
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 20 December 1997.