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## **Saudi Arabia: Executing seven men would be act of sheer brutality**

Seven men who hit the headlines last week when it emerged that one of them faced “crucifixion” following execution in Saudi Arabia, look set to be shot on Wednesday morning, prompting Amnesty International to call for a halt to what would be nothing more than an act of sheer brutality.

Those close to the men report that seven mounds of earth have appeared in a public square in Abha, the city in which they are detained, signalling what people believe is their imminent execution.

“Executing these men would be an act of sheer brutality - it must be stopped immediately. All seven should be granted a new trial and torture allegations must be investigated,” said Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

The seven men were arrested in 2005 and 2006 on charges of armed robbery.

All of them reported that they were tortured or otherwise ill-treated while held in custody and forced to “confess” to the alleged crime. They also claimed their relatives were threatened with torture if they withdrew their “confessions”.

“It is a bloody day when a government executes seven people on the grounds of ‘confessions’ obtained under torture, submitted at a trial where they had no legal representation or recourse to appeal. The Saudi authorities granted a stay of execution earlier in the month. They must now revoke the outrageous decision to proceed with the killings.

“The death penalty is a violation of a fundamental human right – the right to life – and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, whatever form it takes.”

Two of the men are believed to have been juveniles at the time of the alleged crime: Ali bin Muhammad bin Hazam al-Shihri and Sa’id bin Nasser bin Muhammad al-Shahrani.

In a trial only lasting several hours, all men were denied legal representation and refused the opportunity to appeal. Saudi Arabian authorities postponed the executions after an international outcry.