

URGENT ACTION

AMPUTATION SENTENCES COMMUTED

Six men sentenced to amputation of their right hands and left feet for “highway robbery” in Saudi Arabia are now known to have had their sentences commuted by the King in September.

Barzan bin Raheel al-Shammari, Amer bin Eid al-Jarba’, Muhammad bin Ali al-Shammari, Muhammad bin Dhiyab Maddhi, Abdullah bin Dhiyab Maddhi and Bandar bin Abbas al-As’adi, all aged between 22 and around 30 and from Bedouin tribes, were arrested in October 2010 in the capital, Riyadh. They were accused of “highway robbery” and were transferred to Malaz prison. All of them say they were beaten and forced to confess to the charges against them.

Amer bin Eid al-Jarba’ was reported to have been beaten for eight days and told that if he did not confess, his three brothers would be arrested. It appears that he signed a confession without knowing its contents and, afterwards, was placed in solitary confinement for 33 days.

All six were tried before the General Court in Riyadh with no legal assistance or representation and were sentenced in March to “cross amputation” of their right hands and left feet for “highway robbery”. A court of appeal was reported to have upheld the verdict in October and the Supreme Court to have confirmed it in late December 2011.

It is reported that the King commuted their sentences to 20 years’ imprisonment. They are also expected to serve a further two years’ imprisonment on another charge in relation to the same case.

Amnesty International received a message of thanks from a relative of one of the men for all the work undertaken and the appeals sent on behalf of the six men.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 363/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/mde23/030/2011>



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Punishment by amputation is enforced in Saudi Arabia for offences mainly limited to cases of “theft”, for which the sentence is amputation of the right hand, and “highway robbery”, which is punished by cross amputation (right hand and left foot).

On 21 November 2012, Nigerian national Muhammad Ahmed Ibrahim had his right hand amputated for theft.

The use of corporal punishments such as amputation violates the absolute prohibition against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment set out in Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”, as well as Saudi Arabia’s obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which it is a state party. The UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment has stated that “corporal punishment is inconsistent with the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

Court proceedings in Saudi Arabia generally fall far short of international standards for fair trial. Defendants are rarely allowed formal representation by a lawyer, 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, for example through torture or other ill-treatment, or deception.

Name: Barzan bin Raheel al-Shammari, Amer bin Eid al-Jarba’, Muhammad bin Ali al-Shammari, Muhammad bin Dhiyab Maddhi, aged 27, Abdullah bin Dhiyab Maddhi, and Bandar bin Abbas al-As’adi.

Gender m/f: All male.

Further information on UA: 363/11 Index: MDE 23/022/2012 Issue Date: 23 November 2012