

URGENT ACTION

ESSAM AHMED EXECUTED AFTER GROSSLY UNFAIR TRIAL

On 16 December 2025, Saudi authorities executed Egyptian fisherman Essam Ahmed for drug-related offences. Saudi authorities arrested him in December 2021 on a fishing boat between Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Essam Ahmed said he was coerced by a man wielding a gun to transport drugs. In November 2022, the Criminal Court in Tabuk sentenced him to death after a grossly unfair trial for non-violent, drug-related offences. He said he was tortured immediately after his arrest and “confessed” under torture to drug trafficking. He had no lawyer throughout his arrest and investigation period.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

On 16 December 2025, Saudi authorities executed Egyptian fisherman Essam Ahmed for drug-related offences. Saudi authorities arrested him in December 2021 in the sea somewhere between Saudi Arabia and Egypt. He said he had been coerced by a man wielding a gun to carry a package by sea from Egypt. He said he dropped the package in the water and was intercepted by Saudi border guards while still in Egyptian waters. After his arrest, Essam Ahmed said he was taken to a detention centre on the Saudi shore. For three days, he was subjected to regular beatings. He eventually signed a “confession” that he had transported drugs and that he was arrested in Saudi waters.

Essam Ahmed was subjected to a grossly unfair trial. He told the judge that he was threatened at gunpoint in Egypt and that he had been coerced into carrying the package, but his claims were not included in his court documents or raised during the appeal process. His family said that he had no legal representation during his arrest nor investigation. The judge imposed a ta’zir death sentence on him despite the discretion he had to choose another punishment.

The use of the death penalty for drug-related offences violates international law and standards. In recent years, under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, executions in Saudi Arabia have reached record-highs. In 2024, the 345 executions carried out marked the highest number of executions Amnesty International had recorded in Saudi Arabia since Amnesty International began logging executions in 1990. Approximately 35% of these, or 122 people, were executed for drug-related offences. In 2024, Saudi Arabia was one of only four countries worldwide with reported executions for drug-related offences. Foreign nationals are being put to death at a startling rate for drug-related offences. Foreign nationals face additional challenges to receiving a fair trial in Saudi Arabia, a country that is not their own with an inherently opaque criminal justice system. Dozens more foreign nationals remain at risk of execution.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. Essam Ahmed’s execution underscores the devastating toll of the Saudi authorities’ ruthless use of the death penalty, including for non-violent offences. Amnesty International will continue campaigning to save the lives of other people on death row.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Essam Ahmed (he/him)

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 65/25

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/0086/2025/en/>

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

