

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 22/99

Death Penalty

15 February 1999

EGYPT Imam Mohammad Zaki, aged 23
Nabiha Sallama 'Abd al-'Aziz, (f), aged 35

On 10 February 1999, the Cairo Criminal Court sentenced Nabiha Sallama 'Abd al-'Aziz (f) and her lover Imam Mohammad Zaki to death, after finding them guilty of murdering her husband.

Once their sentences have been approved by the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in the country, they may be at imminent risk of execution.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty has been used extensively in Egypt in recent years. It is usually applied for criminal offences such as drug use or trafficking and murder, and for offences relating to "terrorism". In 1998, Amnesty International recorded 73 death sentences passed by military, criminal and (Emergency) Supreme State Security courts, and 48 executions. So far this year, at least four death sentences have been passed by the Criminal Court.

Death sentences issued by criminal and (Emergency) Supreme State Security courts are submitted to the *Mufti* for approval as a routine measure. They are subsequently passed to the President of the Republic or his nominee for ratification. Appeals against final verdicts by criminal courts can only be submitted before the Court of Cassation when procedural irregularities in the trial can be proved.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send e-mails/telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English, French, or your own language:

- acknowledging the seriousness of the crime for which Nabiha Sallama 'Abd al-'Aziz and Imam Mohammad Zaki were convicted, but explaining your opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life, pointing out that it has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect, and is brutalizing to all involved in its application;
- urging Egypt's President to use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute these and all other pending death sentences;
- drawing attention to world trends to abolish or reduce the use of the death penalty, in accordance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a state party;
- reminding the government of Egypt of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life ...".

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt

Telegrams: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt

Telexes: 93794 WAZRA UN

Faxes: + 202 390 1998

E-mail: webmaster@presidency.gov.eg

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

The Human Rights Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt

Faxes: + 202 574 9533

Dr Fathi Sorour

Speaker

The People's Assembly

Magles al-Sha'ab Street, Cairo, Egypt

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and to diplomatic representatives of Egypt accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 February 1999.