

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 38/97

Death penalty

20 March 1997

EGYPT Ahmad Metwalli, aged 30

Ahmad Metwalli, a 30-year-old hospital worker, was sentenced to death on 15 March 1997 by the West Alexandria criminal court after being found guilty of murder. The sentence has been passed on to the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in the country, for approval.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is applied in Egypt for criminal offences such as drug use or trafficking and murder. Dozens of people have been sentenced to death in Egypt for such crimes in the last few years. It is also applied for offences related to "terrorism". The death penalty has been increasingly used in such cases since President Hosni Mubarak began issuing special decrees referring civilians to be tried by military courts in October 1992. Seventy-four death sentences have been passed by military courts since then and 54 executions have been carried out.

Death sentences in criminal cases are submitted to the *Mufti* for approval. This is a routine measure, as he approves the vast majority of them. They are then passed on to the President or his nominee for ratification. Final verdicts by criminal courts can be appealed against before the Court of Cassation only when it can be proved that there were procedural irregularities in the trial. The death sentences issued by military courts are subject to ratification by the President of the Republic, and then review by the Military Appeals Bureau, also headed by the President.

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

- acknowledging the seriousness of the crime for which Ahmad Metwalli was convicted, but explaining your opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life;
- urging the President to use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute the death sentence against Ahmad Metwalli and all other pending death sentences;
- expressing concern at the upsurge in the use of the death penalty in Egypt, and 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.

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Ms Nayla Gabr
The Human Rights Department

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: (20 2) 574 9667

Dr Fathi Sorour
Speaker
The People's Assembly
Magles al-Sha'ab Street, Cairo, Egypt

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 17 April 1997.