

EXTERNAL

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Death Penalty

24 February 1998

EGYPTRidha Qarni 'Abdallah (F)

Ridha Qarni 'Abdallah was sentenced to death on 17 February 1998 by the Fayyoun criminal court, south of Cairo, after being found guilty of murder. The sentence has now been passed to the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in the country, for approval. Ridha Qarni 'Abdallah reportedly killed her husband in collaboration with her lover, Rabi' Sa'ad. The court will decide on the prison sentence against her accomplice at a later court session.

The death penalty, which is applied in Egypt for criminal offences such as drug use or trafficking and murder, and for offences related to "terrorism", has been used extensively in the country in recent years. In 1997 alone Amnesty International recorded 55 death sentences passed by military, criminal and (Emergency) Supreme State Security courts and 24 executions. Furthermore, since October 1992, when President Hosni Mubarak began issuing special decrees referring civilians to be tried by military courts, 85 death sentences have been passed by such courts and 62 executions have been carried out.

Death sentences issued by criminal and (Emergency) Supreme State Security courts 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 of the Republic 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. 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 of the Republic.

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 Ridha Qarni 'Abdallah was 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 the President to use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute this 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.

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

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

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 7 April 1998.