

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 102/96

Death Penalty

5 July 1996

EGYPT 'Assem Labib Hassan

On 27 June 1996, 'Assem Labib Hassan was convicted of murder and sentenced to death by a criminal court in Cairo. This brings the number of people sentenced to death in Egypt in 1996, as recorded by Amnesty International, to 26. To date, 11 people, including four sentenced to death in previous years, have been executed during 1996.

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. It is also applied for offences related to "terrorism".

The death penalty has been increasingly applied in such cases since President Hosni Mubarak began issuing special decrees referring civilians to be tried by military courts in October 1992: 70 death sentences have been passed by military courts since that date and 54 executions have now been carried out.

Death sentences in criminal cases are submitted to the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in the country, 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. 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 of the Republic.

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

- expressing concern that 'Assem Labib Hassan has been sentenced to death and urging the President to use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute this and other pending death sentences;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of violent crime and their families, but explaining your opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the most extreme form of cruel and inhuman punishment;
- acknowledging the seriousness of the crime for which 'Assem Labib Hassan was convicted, and the right of governments to bring criminals to justice, but pointing out that there is no evidence that the death penalty is an effective deterrent to such crimes;
- expressing concern at the upsurge in the use of the death penalty in Egypt, 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:

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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 10 August 1996.