

EXTERNAL

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Death Penalty

19 May 1997

EGYPT Ibrahim 'Abd al-Tawwab Bahgat, taxi driver
'Abd al-Hakim Ra'id Mohammad, taxi driver
Gamal Mohammad al-Sayyid, former police officer

Ibrahim 'Abd al-Tawwab Bahgat, 'Abd al-Hakim Ra'id Mohammad and Gamal Mohammad al-Sayyid were sentenced to death by the Cairo Criminal Court on 13 May 1997 after being found guilty of murder. Their sentences have been passed on to the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in the country, for approval.

A fourth individual, 'Ali Mohammad 'Abd al-Muttalib, was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour in the same case.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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. So far this year Amnesty International has recorded 19 death sentences passed by military, criminal and (Emergency) State Security courts. Three people sentenced to death in previous years have been executed during the same period. Furthermore, since October 1992 when President Hosni Mubarak began issuing special decrees referring civilians to be tried by military courts, 74 death sentences have been passed by such courts 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 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 Ibrahim 'Abd al-Tawwab Bahgat, 'Abd al-Hakim Ra'id Mohammad and Gamal Mohammad al-Sayyid 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 the 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.

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
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 3 July 1997.