

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 14/01/97

UA 58/97

Death Penalty

4 March 1997

IRAQZaban Batah al-Zuweili, Saudi Arabian national
Nasir Hantur al-Ruweili, Jordanian national

Amnesty International has received reports that Zaban Batah al-Zuweili, a Saudi Arabian national, and Nasir Hantur al-Ruweili, a Jordanian national, were sentenced to death on 22 February 1997. Both men were arrested in January 1997 and convicted of the murder of 'Omar Ahmad 'Ali Sobh, a Jordanian Government official. He was killed in his car in November 1996 whilst travelling from Amman to Baghdad.

Zaban Batah al-Zuweili and Nasir Hantur al-Ruweili reportedly appeared on Iraqi television on 15 February 1997 and confessed to killing 'Omar Ahmad 'Ali Sobh in order to steal his car. Amnesty International is concerned that the two men may not have been tried in accordance with international standards for fair trial.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is imposed in Iraq for a wide range of criminal and political offences. Each year hundreds of executions, including extrajudicial executions, are reported to have been carried out and the victims include suspected political opponents, army officers and defendants convicted of criminal offences. Under Iraq's Constitution the President of the Republic has the power to commute death sentences.

Amnesty International recognizes the rights and responsibilities of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate violation of the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment.

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

- acknowledging the rights and responsibilities of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty, a punishment which has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect and is brutalising to all involved in its application;
- urging that the death sentences on Zaban Batah al-Zuweili and Nasir Hantur al-Ruweili be commuted;
- expressing concern that their trial may not have complied with internationally recognized standards for fair trial;
- seeking clarification of trial procedures followed in this case.

APPEALS TO:

1) H.E. President Saddam Hussain
President of the Republic
Presidential Palace
Karadat Mariam
Baghdad, Iraq

Telexes: 212299 alqasr ik

Telegrams: President Hussain, Baghdad, Iraq

Salutation: Your Excellency

2) H.E. Muhammad Zamman 'Abd al-Razzaq
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Baghdad, Iraq

Telegrams: Interior Minister al-Hassan, Baghdad, Iraq

Salutation: Your Excellency

3) H.E. Shabib Lazem al-Maliki
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Baghdad, Iraq

Telegrams: Justice Minister al-Maliki, Baghdad, Iraq

Salutation: Your Excellency

Regular postal services to Iraq have been suspended since the imposition of sanctions in 1990. However, it appears that postal services to Iraq have resumed in some countries on a limited basis. **Before sending appeals, please check with the postal services in your country to find out what services are available.** If you cannot write directly to Baghdad, send appeals to Iraq's diplomatic representative in your country.

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Iraq accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 April 1997.