

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 15/83/96

UA 293/96

Death Penalty

16 December 1996

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY Khalil al-Sakni, aged 24
Hatem Abu Wadi, aged 21

On 15 December 1996 Khalil al-Sakni and Hatem Abu Wadi were sentenced to death by firing squad by a Military Court in the Palestinian Authority. They are reportedly members of the *Hamas* military wing, *Izzadin al-Qassem*, and were convicted of killing a policeman and seizing his gun, and of participating in the killing of a civilian.

They have the right to appeal within 15 days against the death sentences.

Another defendant, 18-year-old 'Abdullah al-Latif al-Ashkur, had his death sentence reduced to 20 years' imprisonment on account of his age.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There have been 12 death sentences (including the above) imposed since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in May 1994. Two death sentences have been commuted. None have been carried out.

Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of authorities to bring to justice those who have committed crimes. However, the organization opposes the death penalty without reservation as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

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

- stating that Amnesty International does not condone crimes of violence, but opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life;
- urging that the death sentences passed on Khalil al-Sakni and Hatem Abu Wadi be commuted;
- urging the Palestinian Authority, following world trends against the death penalty, to abolish the death penalty and ensure that any new penal code excludes the death penalty as a punishment for both civilians and military.

APPEALS TO:

President Yasser Arafat
Palestinian Authority
Al-Muntada
Gaza, Palestinian Authority
Faxes: +972 7 822 365 (ask to send a fax)
Telegrams: President Arafat, Palestinian Authority, Gaza
Salutation: Dear President Arafat

Khaled al-Qidreh
Attorney-General
Attorney-General Building
Yarmouk, Gaza, Palestinian Authority
Faxes: +972 7 824 503
Telegrams: Attorney General, Palestinian Authority, Gaza
Salutation: Dear Mr al-Qidreh

COPIES TO:

Dr Iyad al-Sarraj
The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights
Ritz Hotel
Ibn Khaldun Street
PO Box 54627
Jerusalem Via Israel
Fax: +972 2 28 28 69

and to diplomatic representatives of the Palestinian Authority accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 January 1997.