

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Penalty

22 December 1994

JORDAN Abdullah Hashaikeh
 Isma'il al-'Amayra, 28
 Zakharia Qassem, 23
 Muhammad 'Ali 'Issa, 25
 Muhammad Ahmad al-'Atharba, 25
 Suleiman 'Abd al-'Aal, 22
 Samir Taylakh, 23
 Yassin Zahra, 20
 Muhammad Ahmad al-Harithi, Omani national, sentenced *in absentia*
 Yahya 'Uwaydat Muhammad al-Shawarkah, Jordanian national, sentenced *in absentia*
 Hamed Jamal Khalifah, Saudi Arabian national, sentenced *in absentia*

Amnesty International is concerned about the sentencing to death of 11 people by the State Security Court on 21 December, on charges of taking part in a plot to overthrow the government, and through bombings on public and private institutions during 1993. Three of the 11 sentenced to death were tried *in absentia*, having evaded capture.

The death sentences will be reviewed before the Court of Cassation and if upheld, must be ratified by King Hussain bin Talal before they may be carried out.

Three others tried at the same time had their death sentences commuted to life imprisonment, with hard labour, four defendants were given jail sentences, ranging between seven and 20 years, and seven were acquitted.

Following the sentencing Hafez Amin, president of the court said, "We have not been unjust to them, they have done injustice to themselves."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The trial of these 25 people began on 18 July. Many of the defendants are veterans of the Afghan war, where they fought with Islamist resistance groups before the overthrow of the Soviet-backed government in 1992. Hence the trial has become known as the trial of the "Arab Afghans".

Some 16 of the defendants had retracted confessions which they claim to have made as a result of torture; all the defendants had pleaded innocence at the start of the trial.

During 1994 Amnesty International has repeatedly expressed its concerns to the Jordanian authorities about the increase in the use of the death penalty. At least seven executions have taken place this year with 12 executions during 1993, the highest number for two decades. Others remain on death row.

Amnesty International does not condone crimes of violence, and recognizes the responsibility of governments to bring the perpetrators to justice. However, it opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and of the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment as specified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters

either in English, Arabic or in your own language:

- urging that the death sentences passed on the 11 people named above be commuted in the event that they are upheld by the Court of Cassation;
- reiterating Amnesty International's unconditional opposition to the death penalty and urging that no future death sentences be passed, and that no further executions be carried out;
- urging the Jordan Government to sign the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aimed at abolishing the death penalty.

APPEALS TO

1) His Majesty King Hussein bin Talal
King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
The Royal Palace
Amman
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Faxes: +962-6-634-755
Salutation: Your Majesty

2) His Excellency Dr 'Abd al-Salam al-Majali
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
PO Box 80
Amman
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Faxes: +962-6-642-520
Telegrams: Prime Minister, Amman, Jordan
Salutation: Your Excellency

3) His Excellency Hisham al-Tall
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Amman
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Telegrams: Minister of Justice
Salutation: Your Excellency

4) His Excellency Salamah Hammad
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Amman
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
Faxes: +962-6-606-908
Telegrams: Minister of the Interior, Amman, Jordan
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: diplomatic representatives of Jordan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office if sending appeals after 2 February 1995.