

URGENT ACTION

SEVEN MEN PUBLICLY EXECUTED IN SAUDI ARABIA

Seven Saudi Arabian men were publicly executed on 13 March in Abha, Saudi Arabia, despite appeals by family and international organizations to halt the executions on grounds of unfair trial and underage.

The seven men – **Sarhan bin Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mashayekh, Sa'id bin Hassan bin Ahmed al-'Amri, Ali bin Muhammad bin Hazam al-Shihri, Nasser bin Sa'id bin Sa'ad al-Qahtani, Sa'id bin Nasser bin Muhammad al-Shahrani, Abdul Aziz bin Saleh bin Muhammad al-'Amri and Ali bin Hadi bin Sa'id al-Qahtani** – were initially to be executed on 5 March 2013. Their executions were postponed for a week after their family members and international organizations called on the Saudi Arabian authorities to look into allegations of torture and unfair trial. Two of them were thought to be juveniles at the time of their alleged crime.

In the early hours of 13 March, the seven men (all in their early 20s) were taken to the public square in Abha, a south-western town in Saudi Arabia, and shot. They were not officially informed of their execution, but found out about it through friends and relatives who had sent them photos of a large security presence and seven mounds of earth being erected in the public square. Their last-minute appeals and those of international organizations did not succeed in halting the execution.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights strongly condemned the executions saying “they clearly violate international safeguards in the use of the death penalty.” In a news release on 14 March, the Commissioner further stated that according to these international safeguards “...capital punishment may be imposed only for ‘the most serious crimes’ and only after the most rigorous judicial process... neither of those fundamental criteria appear to have been fulfilled in these cases.” Echoing concerns of torture, the statement maintained that “[s]uch acts constitute a violation of international human rights law, as well as customary law that prohibits the use of torture.”

The seven men were arrested in early 2006. They claimed that during their interrogation at the Criminal Investigation Department in Abha, they were severely beaten, denied food and water, deprived of sleep, forced to remain standing for 24 hours, and then forced to sign “confessions”. They were detained for three and a half years in Abha General Prison before they went on trial. The Abha General Court found all seven guilty of armed robbery in August 2009 and sentenced them to death. Their trial lasted only a few hours, and they were denied any legal representation or appeal. They said that security officers present at the trial warned them that if they withdrew their “confessions” they would be tortured again, and members of their families – including their mothers – would be brought to prison and tortured in their presence.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the second update of UA 58/13. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/009/2013/en and www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/008/2013/en

Names: Sarhan bin Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mashayekh, Sa'id bin Hassan bin Ahmed al-'Amri, Ali bin Muhammad bin Hazam al-Shihri, Nasser bin Sa'id bin Sa'ad al-Qahtani, Sa'id bin Nasser bin Muhammad al-Shahrani, Abdul Aziz bin Saleh bin Muhammad al-'Amri, and Ali bin Hadi bin Sa'id al-Qahtani.

Gender m/f: m

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