

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 174/99

Death penalty / Fear of imminent execution

3 December

SAUDI ARABIA Aman, aged 28

Amnesty International fears that a Saudi Arabian man accused of murder will be executed on 8 December 1999 if he is unable to raise US\$1.3 million "blood money" (compensation) demanded by the victim's family.

The victim is reported to have died after being struck on the head with a stick during a traditional dance. The victim's family is reported to have agreed to spare his life if he pays them US\$1.3 million, a figure the national press has reported as being unusually high in such a case. According to Reuters, the daily newspapers *Al-Madinah* and the *Arab News* have started a campaign to help raise the money through donations, but, by 1 December had only raised just over half the amount needed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabian law allows the family of a murder victim to halt the execution of the accused, and demand "blood money" as financial compensation.

Capital trials in Saudi Arabia do not comply with internationally recognised standards. Prisoners are often tried *in camera*, and without legal assistance; confessions obtained under torture are sometimes admitted in court.

Amnesty International has recorded 102 executions in the country this year, though it is feared that the true figure may be much higher.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams and faxes only, in English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to immediately halt the execution of a Saudi Arabian man trying to raise US\$1.3 million "blood money" demanded by the family of the victim;
- asking the authorities to commute his sentence to a more humane punishment;
- reminding the authorities that capital trials in Saudi Arabia violate Articles 1 and 5 of the 1984 United Nations Safeguards guaranteeing the protection of those facing the death penalty, which state respectively "*In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, capital punishment may be imposed only for the most serious crimes, it being understood that their scope should not go beyond intentional crimes with lethal or other extremely grave consequences*", and "*Capital punishment may only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court after legal process which gives all possible safeguards to ensure a fair trial... including the right of anyone suspected of or charged with a crime for which capital punishment may be imposed to adequate legal assistance at all stages of the proceedings.*"
- urging the authorities to follow international standards for capital trials and to immediately halt all executions and to commute all outstanding death sentences.

APPEALS TO:

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines
His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul-'Aziz
Office of H.M. The King
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness, Prince Naif bin 'Abdul-'Aziz
Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior
PO Box 2933, Airport Road,
Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Faxes: + 966 1 403 1185

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency
Dr. Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice
University Street,
Riyadh 11137, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Information

His Excellency Dr. Fuad Abdul Salam Al-Farsi
Minister of Information, Ministry of Information
PO Box 843, Riyadh 11161,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Information Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Faxes: + 966 1 402 3570

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.