

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 12/28/98

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Death penalty

22 May 1998

**EGYPT** Magdi Hamed Thabit, student  
Ussama Mohammad Thabit  
Saber 'Ali Abu-Zeid

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Magdi Hamed Thabit, Ussama Mohammad Thabit and Saber 'Ali Abu-Zeid were sentenced to death by the Giza Criminal court on 16 May 1998. Their sentences have now been passed to the *Mufti* for ratification. They are at risk of imminent execution if the sentences are upheld.

The three men were found guilty of murdering two people while they tried to burgle a house.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Death sentences issued by criminal and (Emergency) Supreme State Security courts are submitted to the *Mufti*, Egypt's highest religious authority, for approval as a routine measure. The *Mufti* usually approves the vast majority of sentences, which are subsequently passed on to the President of the Republic or his nominee for ratification. Final verdicts by criminal courts can be appealed against before the Court of Cassation, but only when it can be proved that there were procedural irregularities at the trial.

The death penalty is applied in Egypt for criminal offences such as drug use or trafficking and murder, and for offences related to "terrorism". It has been used extensively in the country in recent years. In 1997 alone Amnesty International recorded 55 death sentences passed by military, criminal and (Emergency) Supreme State Security courts, and 24 executions.

So far in 1998, Amnesty International has recorded 25 death sentences and 19 executions.

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

- acknowledging the seriousness of the crime for which Magdi Hamed Thabit, Ussama Mohammad Thabit and Saber 'Ali Abu-Zeid were convicted, but explaining your opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life, pointing out that it has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect, and is brutalizing to all involved in its application;
- urging the President to use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute these and all other pending death sentences;
- drawing attention to world trends to abolish or reduce the use of the death penalty, in accordance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a state party.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak  
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt

**Telegrams: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt**

**Telexes: 93794 WAZRA UN**

**Faxes: + 202 390 1998**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

Ms Nayla Gabr  
The Human Rights Department  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Corniche al-Nil, Cairo, Egypt  
**Faxes: + 202 574 9533**

Dr Fathi Sorour  
Speaker  
The People's Assembly  
Magles al-Sha'ab Street, Cairo, Egypt  
**Faxes: + 202 574 91 75**

and to diplomatic representatives of Egypt accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 July 1998.