

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 12/39/99

EXTRA 143/99

Death Penalty

11 October

**EGYPT 'Awatif Sayyid Mohammad (f), 30
'Atef Taha Abdallah, 32**

'Awatif Sayyid Mohammad and 'Atef Taha Abdallah were sentenced to death by the Banha Criminal Court on 7 October 1999. Their death sentences have now been passed for approval to the *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in Egypt, and will then be passed on to the President for ratification. If their sentences are upheld, they will face imminent execution.

According to reports received by Amnesty International, they were convicted of killing 'Eid Mussa Ahmad, 'Awatif Sayyid Mohammad's husband, last year in the small town of Qanater al-Khayriya, north of Cairo.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty, which is applied for criminal offences such as drug use or trafficking and murder, and for offences related to "terrorism", has been used extensively in Egypt in recent years. In 1998 Amnesty International recorded 74 death sentences passed by military, criminal and (Emergency) Supreme State Security courts, and 48 executions. So far this year 73 death sentences and 15 executions have been recorded.

Death sentences issued by criminal and (Emergency) Supreme State Security courts are submitted to the *Mufti* for approval as a routine measure. The majority are approved. They are subsequently passed on to the President of the Republic or his nominee for ratification. Appeals against final verdicts by criminal courts can be submitted to the Court of Cassation, but only on the grounds of procedural irregularities in the trial.

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

- acknowledging the seriousness of the crime of which 'Awatif Sayyid Mohammad and 'Atef Taha Abdallah were convicted, but explaining your opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life (as stated in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person"), 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 Mufti not to ratify their death sentences;
- 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:

M. Farid Nasr Wassel
Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Wakf Ministry
Sabri Abou Alam Street
Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt
Faxes: + 202 390 0362
E-mails: mawkaf@idscl.gov.eg

Salutation:Your Excellency

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

e-mails:webmaster@presidency.gov.eg

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

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 8 November 1999.