

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 16/02/97

21 March 1997

Further information (1) on UA 276/96 (MDE 16/11/96, 26 November 1996) - Death Penalty / Torture

JORDAN Montasser Rajab Abu-Zaid

On 2 March 1997 the Court of Cassation ratified the death sentence on Montasser Rajab Abu-Zaid. He had been sentenced to death on 23 November 1996 by the Jordanian Criminal Court following his conviction on murder charges. The death sentence must be ratified by King Hussein bin Talal before it is carried out.

Montasser Rajab Abu-Zaid alleges that he and his wife were beaten and deprived of sleep while held in preventive detention in the police station in Salt, during which time he made a confession. His wife, who was not a suspect in the case, was released from police custody. Montasser Rajab Abu-Zaid's confession reportedly formed the basis for his conviction. The court did not order an investigation into these allegations.

Amnesty International does not in any way condone violent crime and recognizes the responsibility of governments to punish the perpetrators. However, the organization considers the death penalty to be the severest form of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and a violation of the right to life, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is therefore unconditionally opposed to its use.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1996, at least 23 people were sentenced to death in Jordan and ten people were executed. At least 13 people had their death sentences commuted to life imprisonment by King Hussein bin Talal during the same year.

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

- expressing dismay at the decision by the Court of Cassation to uphold the death sentence on Montasser Rajam Abu-Zaid;
- reiterating concern that his conviction was reportedly based on his confession, made after he and his wife were allegedly tortured in pre-trial detention, and urging an immediate investigation into these allegations;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of violent crimes and their families and acknowledging the right and duty of governments to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice, but stating opposition to the death penalty in all cases;
- urging that the death sentence on Montasser Rajam Abu-Zaid be commuted;
- urging that no further executions be carried out in Jordan and that the new cabinet work to abolish 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 6 627 421
Telegrams: King Hussein, Amman, Jordan
Salutation: Your Majesty

2. 'Abd al-Salam 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. Riyad al-'Aqasha

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

Amman, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Amman, Jordan

Salutation: Your Excellency

4. Nazir Rashid

Minister of Interior

Ministry of Interior

Amman, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Amman, Jordan

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Arab Organization for Human Rights (Jordan)

PO Box 922430

Amman, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

and 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 May 1997.