

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 96/95 Alarming Increase in Number of Executions

20 April 1995

SAUDI ARABIA

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at the sharp increase in the number of executions in Saudi Arabia. At least 90 people were executed between 20 January and 19 April 1995. This is the highest number of executions recorded by Amnesty International to have taken place in such a short period in Saudi Arabia.

This high figure of executions carried out in such a short period, which included the traditional moratorium on executions during the holy month of Ramadan (beginning of February to beginning of March), is particularly alarming as it marks an acceleration in a continuing trend in the upsurge in executions since the beginning of this decade. The numbers of executions recorded by Amnesty International in 1990, 91, 92, 93 and 94 were 15, 29, 66, 88 and 53 respectively.

Amnesty International's concerns are heightened by the fact that executions are carried out after trials in which internationally agreed safeguards for prisoners facing the death sentence are completely ignored. Defendants have no right to be formally represented by defence lawyers during their trials, and confessions, even when obtained under torture, are accepted by the court as evidence, and may be the sole evidence on which conviction is based.

Amnesty International is also concerned about reports suggesting that seven Somali nationals were sentenced to death in 1994 for crimes that they allegedly did not commit. All were reportedly charged with the murder of three people, but were said to have insisted that they were innocent. In one case, that of `Abd al-`Aziz Muhammad ISSE, the crime of which he was found guilty is said to have occurred before his arrival in Saudi Arabia from Somalia. Although this information is obtainable from the airport of his arrival in Saudi Arabia, it was apparently not taken into account during his trial. The other six Somalis are: Muhammad Jamal `ALI, `Abd al-Qadir Muhammad MUQTAR, Faqay Haji CUSMAN, Sali Id Farah YACQUB, Muhammad Nur MUHAMMAD, Muhammad Abu `Abd al-Qadir ADE. They are all reported to have been held in Priman and Ruwais Prisons in Jeddah in 1994. Amnesty International has sought clarification of these cases from the Saudi Arabian Minister of Justice but has not received a response.

Most of the 90 or so executed this year were found guilty of murder and drug offences. Others were found guilty of varying offenses. Ahmad Bin Hadi Bin Ahmad `ATIF, a Saudi Arabian national, was executed on charges which included witchcraft and sexual offences. Another Saudi Arabian national, Sa`id Bin Abdullah Bin Sa`id BAJA`FAR was executed for making, distributing and consuming alcohol and taking drugs. A woman, Fatimah Bint `ABDULLAH was executed after being found guilty of sexual offences and chewing qat.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia retains the death penalty for a wide range of offences. These include murder, rape and other sexual offences, apostasy, drug smuggling, and acts of sabotage. For more details on the death penalty and executions in Saudi Arabia see Amnesty International report, *Saudi Arabia: An upsurge in public executions*, AI-Index 23/04/93.

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

- calling for clarification of reports that Muhammad Jamal `ALI, `Abd al-Qadir Muhammad MUQTAR, Faqay Haji CUSMAN, Sali Id Farah YACQUB, Muhammad Nur MUHAMMAD, Muhammad Abu `Abd al-Qadir ADE and `Abd al-`Aziz Muhammad ISSE are on death row and if this is the case urging that their death sentences be commuted;
- expressing grave concern about the alarming increase in the number of executions in Saudi Arabia and calling for a halt to such executions;
- urging that international safeguards for defendants charged with capital offences are strictly observed during trials of such defendants.

APPEALS TO

His Royal Highness
 Prince Naif bin 'Abdul-'Aziz
 Minister of the Interior
 Ministry of the Interior
 PO Box 2833, Airport Road
 Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Minister of the Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 404416
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

His Royal Highness
 Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
 Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Nasseriya Street, Riyadh 11124
 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 405000
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

His Excellency
 Dr `Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
 Minister of Justice
 Ministry of Justice
 Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Telegrams: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Telexes: 405 9443
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 June 1995.