

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 23/07/96

21 June 1996

Further information on EXTRA 80/96 (MDE 23/04/96, 28 May 1996) and follow-up (MDE 23/06/96, 31 May) - Risk of Execution / Legal and Torture Concerns

SAUDI ARABIA 'Abd al-'Aziz Naser al-Mi'tham, businessman, aged 24
Riyad Suleyman Is-Haq al-Harji, aged 24
Muslih Ali A'idh al-Shamrani, former state employee, aged 28
Khalid Ahmad Ibrahim al-Sa'id, businessman, aged 24
and possibly others

"It is regrettable that Amnesty International should compromise its credibility by expressing anger and outrage at the punishment of criminals who were found guilty of terrorism and sentenced in accordance with the law." This is reported (Reuters, 14 June 1996) to have been the response of the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Britain, Ghazi al-Gosaibi, to Amnesty International's EXTRA update of 31 May concerning the execution that day of the above four prisoners in Riyadh.

As always, Amnesty International's concerns are based on its unconditional opposition to the death penalty **in all instances and all countries**. In the case of Saudi Arabia, these concerns are compounded by the practice whereby prisoners facing the death penalty are invariably subjected to trials in which internationally agreed safeguards for prisoners facing the death penalty are completely ignored. Prisoners are not allowed to be defended by lawyers during trial hearings, and confessions, even when obtained under torture, are accepted as evidence, and may be the sole evidence on which conviction is based.

Shortly before the above four men were shown on Saudi Arabian television on 22 April (see original EXTRA), the Minister of Interior announced that they would be tried, which suggested that their trial had not yet begun. However, 40 days later, on 31 May, they were executed. They had reportedly been arrested two months before they were shown on TV. Amnesty International does not believe that the four were granted the right to a fair trial in accordance with international standards, allowing adequate time and opportunity for defence, various appeal stages, and appeal for clemency. Amnesty International remains convinced that the four prisoners were executed after summary and arbitrary proceedings, in flagrant breach of international human rights standards.

Amnesty International calls on the Saudi Arabian government to halt executions, which have reached 11 this year, and join the international community in implementing the 1984 United Nations Safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of prisoners facing the death penalty.

THIS IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY. THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT IS TAKING UP THE ISSUE WITH THE AMBASSADOR. NO FURTHER ACTION BY THE UA NETWORK IS REQUESTED AT THIS TIME. THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS ON THIS CASE.