

PUBLIC

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Preventive Death Penalty Appeal

4 October 1999

SAUDI ARABIA

Amnesty International is concerned at the surge in the number of executions in Saudi Arabia in recent months. On 4 October Ali Bin Suhaym Bin Hasan al-Shihri, a Saudi Arabian national, was executed in Dammam, bringing the total number of people put to death in Saudi Arabia so far this year to 91. In the month of September alone 19 people were executed, compared with 29 in the whole of 1998.

At least 59 people are known to be currently detained on charges which carry the death penalty, but the real figure may be much higher. Amnesty International has asked the Saudi Arabian government for details of the 59 people, but has received no information. Executions are not announced in advance, and Amnesty International therefore fears that some or all of these people may be at risk of imminent execution. (See UA 251/99, MDE 23/08/99, 27 September 1999.)

The organisation is concerned that capital trials in Saudi Arabia do not comply with internationally recognised standards such as the 1984 United Nations Safeguards guaranteeing the protection of those facing the death penalty and Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Trials are frequently held *in camera* and without legal assistance for the accused. Confessions obtained under torture are sometimes admitted in court, despite Saudi Arabia's accession in 1997 to the UN Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Punishment.

On 1 October a 70-year-old man convicted of murder was reportedly pardoned by the victim's family three minutes before his execution was to have taken place.

BACKGROUND

Saudi Arabia imposes the death penalty for drug trafficking, murder, rape, armed robbery and apostasy (turning away from Islam). Among the 91 people put to death so far this year were a number of foreign nationals, including twelve Pakistanis, 10 Nigerians (three of them women), nine Afghans, six Indians, as well as nationals of Thailand, Indonesia, Syria, Jordan, Ethiopia, Chad and Yemen.

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

- expressing dismay at the increased use of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia in recent months;
- expressing concern that executions are carried out after trials that fall short of international standards, and urging the authorities to follow international standards for capital trials;
- calling for an immediate halt to all executions and the commutation of all outstanding death sentences;

APPEALS TO:

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines

His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul-'Aziz

Office of H.M. The King

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of the Interior

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: Interior Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Faxes: + 966 1403 1185 (this is a telephone and fax, please ask to be connected to the fax if a voice answers)

Telexes: 404416

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency

Dr. Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh

Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Justice Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

ams:
s: 405 980 MINJUS SJ

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Information

His Excellency Dr. Fuad Abdul Salam Al-Farsi

Minister of Information, Ministry of Information

PO Box 843, Riyadh 11161,

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

401641 ARINFOR SJ

402640 MINMO SJ

+ 966 1 402 3570/405 0674

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES 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 15 November 1999.