

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 23/013/2003

20 November 2003

Further Information on UA 301/03 (MDE 23/011/2003, 13 November 2003) and follow-up (MDE 23/009/2003, 24 October 2003) - Possible prisoner of conscience/Torture and ill-treatment/Incommunicado detention/ Medical concern

SAUDI ARABIA	Um Sa'ud (f), aged 60]
	Ahmad bin Sa'd bin Abdel Aziz al-Amhuj (m), aged 37] Saudi Arabian
	Jam'an al-Ghamdi (m) aged 37,] Nationals
	At least 82 others]

New cases: Seven men (names unknown)

According to press reports a court in Jeddah has sentenced seven men to prison terms varying from one to three months and at least 50 lashes each for taking part in a demonstration in Jeddah on 23 October. Amnesty International fears that the men are at risk of imminent flogging and that they have been sentenced for exercising their right to demonstrate peacefully and as such would be prisoners of conscience.

Five of the seven men were sentenced to one month prison term, fifty lashes and made to sign a declaration vowing not to demonstrate again after they apparently admitted to taking part in the demonstrations.

A Saudi Arabian national who reportedly refused to plead guilty and to sign a declaration vowing not to demonstrate again, was sentenced to a two months prison term and 60 lashes. A Sudanese national who also refused to plead guilty and sign the declaration was sentenced to a three month prison term, fifty lashes and ordered to be deported once his sentence had been carried out. Both are reportedly appealing against the decision of the court. None of the seven men were believed to have been represented by a lawyer at the trial.

All seven were reportedly arrested during a protest demonstration which took place in Jeddah on 23 October. A number of other demonstrations took place on the same day in different parts of the country. These followed a main demonstration in Riyadh on 14 October, which coincided with a government organized international human rights conference. Over 250 protestors were arrested. Many were released after interrogation, but at least 83 including Um Sa'ud are still being held.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Flogging is mandatory in Saudi Arabia for a number of offences, and can also be used at the discretion of judges as an alternative or addition to other punishments. Sentences can range from dozens to thousands of lashes.

Amnesty International considers the punishment of flogging to be cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment amounting to torture, in contravention of Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".

Anti-government demonstrations are not allowed in Saudi Arabia. Critics of the state are often at risk of detention. They are also often ill-treated or tortured. Defendants do not have the right to formal representation by a lawyer and in many cases they and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Due to the secrecy of the Saudi Arabian justice system, trials are often held behind closed doors. In the rare instances when individuals are charged and brought to trial, the proceedings invariably fail to meet the most elementary standards of fairness.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic or your own language:

- expressing concern at the report that seven people are to be flogged, and, if it is true, calling for the sentences not to be carried out;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the seven men and others who were arrested if they are being held solely for demonstrating peacefully;
- calling for anyone charged with a recognizably criminal offence to be given a prompt and fair trial;
- stating that you consider the use of flogging as punishment to be cruel, inhuman and degrading, contrary to Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin >Abdul >Aziz,
Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior
P.O. Box 2933, Airport Road,
Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegram: Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 403 1185 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)
Telex: 404416
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin >Abdul >Aziz Al-Saud,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Nasseriya Street,
Riyadh 11124, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegram: Foreign Affairs Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 403 0159 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)
Telex: 405000
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr. >Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice
University Street,
Riyadh 11137, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegram: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Fax: + 966 1 401 1741
Telex: 405 980 MINJUS SJ
Salutation: Your Excellency

King and Prime Minister

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines

His Majesty King Fahd bin >Abdul >Aziz Al-Saud,
Office of H.M. The King, Royal Court,
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegram: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Salutation: Your Majesty

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 1 January 2004.