

UA 285/99

Preventiv**SAUDI ARABIA**

Amnesty International is concerned at the increased use of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia in recent months. The number of people executed this year has now reached 100, more than three times as many as were put to death in the whole of 1998.

On 26 October 1999 official state television announced that Dhafir bin 'Abd al-Rahman bin Dhafir al-Jirman al-Ahmari, a Saudi Arabian national, had been executed that day in the town of Abha. The following day three Pakistani nationals were executed in Mecca.

Amnesty International fears that dozens more people are facing imminent execution after trials which do not meet internationally recognized standards. The organization has asked the Saudi Arabian authorities for clarification of over 50 such cases but has not received any response.

According to press reports the religious police, *al-Mutawa'een*, arrested 25 people for "sorcery" in Asir region on 30 October 1999. If the reports are correct, Amnesty International fears that these people may also be at risk of execution. In 1996 'Abd al-Karim Mir'i al-Nakshabandi, a Syrian national, was executed for practising "magic and witchcraft". His case was shrouded in secrecy and it is believed that neither he nor his family were aware of the sentence until his execution, which was publicly announced by the Ministry of Interior.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Crimes punishable by death in Saudi Arabia include drug trafficking, murder, rape, armed robbery and apostasy (turning away from Islam). Of the 100 people put to death this year, 53 have been foreign nationals, including 15 Pakistanis, 10 Nigerians (three of them women), nine Afghans, six Indians, as well as nationals of Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Syria, Jordan, Ethiopia, Chad and Yemen.

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

- calling for an immediate halt to all executions and the commutation of all outstanding death sentences;
- 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 far short of international standards, and urging the authorities to follow international standards for capital trials;
- seeking clarification of reports that 25 people have been arrested for sorcery, including details of the charges against them and any court proceedings.

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 2933, Airport Road,
Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Faxes: + 966 1 403 1185

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

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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

Fax: + 966 1 402 3570

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 13 December 1999.