

14 July 2000

Further information on UA 116/00 (MDE 23/38/00, 12 May 2000) and follow-up
- Fear of Flogging and new-concern: Possible Prisoners of Conscience

SAUDI ARABIANine Saudi Arabian Nationals

Six men have been executed over the past few days, on charges some of which related to their sexual orientation. Because of the Saudi authorities' silence in the face of thousands of appeals, Amnesty International fears that these six may have been among the nine men reportedly sentenced to flogging and prison terms for "deviant sexual behaviour". The remaining three may be at imminent risk of execution.

Three of the six men executed were Saudi Arabian nationals, whose names were given as 'Attiya bin Obeid 'Attiya, Rajih bin Ibrahim 'Issa and Rajihi bin Hamad bin Ali. They were executed in Abha, Asir Province on 11 July. The others were Yemeni nationals Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Abdullah Jabali, Yahya bin Ahmad Yabas Faraj and Faraj Ali al-Hajuri, who were executed in Jizan Province on 14 July. All six men are reported to have been convicted on charges of sodomy, transvestism, homosexuality and raping young children.

Amnesty International recognizes the serious nature of the charge of rape and recognizes the rights and responsibility of all governments to bring to justice those guilty of recognizably criminal offences. However, Amnesty International is fundamentally opposed to the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate violation of the right to life.

The organization is seriously concerned that all six may have been convicted and executed primarily because of their sexual orientation. Amnesty International considers anyone imprisoned solely on the grounds of their sexual orientation to be a prisoner of conscience, who should be immediately and unconditionally released.

These executions bring to 71 the number of people put to death in Saudi Arabia so far this year.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offences which, in addition to violent crimes, include some with no lethal consequences, such as sexual offences, apostasy, sorcery and drug-related offences.

Flogging is mandatory in Saudi Arabia for a number of offences, including sexual 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"

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

- expressing dismay at the six recent executions;

- recognizing the serious nature of the charge of rape and reiterating your fundamental opposition to the death penalty;
- calling for an immediate halt to all executions and for the commutation of all outstanding death sentences;
- asking whether those executed were among the nine men described in an AP report of 16 April, who were sentenced to flogging and prison terms for "deviant sexual behaviour";
- expressing concern that all six may have been convicted and executed primarily because of their sexual orientation;- if the cases are not connected, asking for details of the current legal status of the men described in the AP report, and expressing concern that they may be prisoners of conscience;
- if the report is true, urging that the sentences are not carried out, and that anyone held solely on account of their sexual orientation be released immediately and unconditionally;
- urging that international standards for capital trials are strictly observed.

APPEALS TO (please note that Saudi fax numbers can be very unreliable):

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 **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

P.O. Box 2933

Airport Road, Riyadh 11134

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: + 966 1 403 1185

Telegram: Minister of Interior, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Telexes: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

Telegrams: Foreign Affairs Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Fax: + 966 1 403 0159

Telexes: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

Fax: + 966 1 401 1741

Telegram: Minister of Justice, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Telexes:405 980 MINJUS SJ

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 25 August 2000.