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## **Clemency urged for man facing imminent execution in Yemen**

Amnesty International has called on the Yemeni authorities to halt the imminent execution of a man facing the death penalty for a murder he is alleged to have committed when he was under 18 years old.

Yemeni authorities are reported to have stopped Muhammed Taher Thabet Samoum's prison visits, prompting fears that his execution could be imminent. He was initially scheduled for execution on 12 January but was granted a temporary reprieve by the Attorney General.

"We urge President Ali Abdullah Saleh to show clemency in this case and prevent the state killing of Muhammed Taher Thabet Samoum, a young man accused of a murder committed when he says he was still under 18," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and it must never be applied to juvenile offenders."

Muhammed Taher Thabet Samoum was sentenced to death in September 2001 by the Criminal Court in Ibb, west Yemen, for a murder he is alleged to have committed in June 1999. He maintains that he was under 18 years old at the time of the alleged offence but does not have a birth certificate.

Another alleged juvenile offender convicted of murder, Fuad Ahmed Ali Abdullah, remains at risk of execution although he was given a temporary reprieve on 18 December 2010, the day before he was due to be executed by firing squad, following the intervention of his lawyer.

He was sentenced to death for a murder committed when he is believed to have been under 18. Yemen's Attorney General is expected to request that his age be determined by a forensic doctor.

"Executing individuals for crimes they are alleged to have committed when they were less than 18 years of age is not only inhumane but also contravenes both Yemeni law Yemen's obligations under international human rights treaties," said Malcolm Smart.

Yemen is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which expressly prohibit the execution of juvenile offenders – those convicted of crimes committed when they were under 18.

Amnesty International is aware of at least eight other people who are possible juvenile offenders on death row in Yemen and has long-standing concerns about the use of the death penalty in the country, particularly as death sentences are often passed after legal proceedings which fail to satisfy international standards for fair trial.

In 2010, at least 51 people were executed in Yemen. At least two more people have been executed since the start of this year. Hundreds of people are believed to be under sentence of death.