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## **Saudi Arabia: King urged to commute “cross amputation” sentences**

Six men facing amputation of their right hands and left feet for “highway robbery” must have their sentences commuted by the King, Amnesty International said today.

The sentence of “cross amputation” is currently before the Supreme Court for approval and could take place in the coming days if also ratified by the King.

“ ‘Cross amputation’ is a strikingly cruel form of punishment that amounts to torture and should have no place in a criminal justice system,” said Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa interim Director.

“We are urging the King to use his authority to urgently commute these sentences and spare these men this horrific punishment.”

The six men, all from Bedouin tribes, were arrested in October 2010 in Riyadh, accused of “highway robbery” and taken to Malaz prison. All were allegedly beaten and forced to confess to the charges against them.

Twenty-six-year-old Amer bin Eid al-Jarba’ was reportedly beaten for eight days and told that if he did not confess, his three brothers would be arrested. It appears that he signed a confession without knowing its contents and was later held in solitary confinement for 33 days.

All six were tried before the General Court in Riyadh with no legal assistance or representation and were sentenced in March 2011 to “cross amputation”.

A court of appeal was said to have upheld the verdict in October.

Punishment by amputation is enforced in Saudi Arabia for offences mainly limited to cases of “theft”, for which the sentence is amputation of the right hand, and “highway robbery”, which is punished by cross amputation (right hand and left foot).

The organization said that the use of “cross amputation” amounts to torture, violating Saudi Arabia's obligations under international human rights law.

“Carrying out a sentence like this would make a mockery of the fact that Saudi Arabia is a signatory to the international Convention against Torture” said Philip Luther.

“The Saudi Arabian authorities should take immediate steps to abolish this practice once and for all.”

The six men facing “cross amputation” are Barzan bin Raheel al-Shammari, aged 29, Amer bin Eid al-

Jarba', aged 26, Muhammad bin Ali al-Shammari, aged 25, Muhammad bin Dhiyab Maddhi, aged 27, Abdullah bin Dhiyab Maddhi, aged 30, and Bandar bin Abbas al-As'adi, aged 22.