

PUBLIC

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Death Penalty/Flogging

SAUDI ARABIA

Sultan Bin Khalid Bin Mahmud al-Maskati (m), aged 23
Yusef Bin Hassan Bin Salman al-Muwallad (m), aged 23
Qassim Bin 'Ali Bin Ibrahim Al-Nakhli (m), aged 22
Sultan Bin Sulayman Bin Muslim al-Muwallad (m), aged 20
'Issa bin Muhammad 'Umar Muhammad (m), aged 20, Chadian national
Bilal Bin Muslih Bin Jabir al-Muwallad (m), aged 19
Ahmad Hamid Muhammad Sabir (m), aged 17, Chadian national

The seven people named above, four of them juvenile offenders, are facing execution or flogging. Their case is now before the Court of Cassation in Mekkah, for a review in which they will have no input, and which will take place in secret. When this is concluded, if their sentences are upheld, they will be passed to the King for ratification, after which those sentenced to death could be executed within days.

They were accused of being members of a gang that carried out a series of robberies and assaults in Madina. They were arrested in 2004 and charged with several counts of theft, robbery and physical assault. They were held incommunicado at police stations in Madina, where they were allegedly beaten in an attempt to make them confess. In February 2008, Madina General Court sentenced five of them to death, the first five listed above, and two to "severe flogging" and imprisonment. Bilal Bin Muslih Bin Jabir al-Muwallad and Ahmad Hamid Muhammad Sabir, who were 15 and 13 respectively at the time of the offences, are to receive 1,500 and 1,250 severe lashes respectively, administered in instalments at 10-day intervals in public at the scene of the offences, in addition to terms of imprisonment.

Saudi Arabia is a state party to the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which expressly prohibits the use of punishments such as flogging.

Sultan Bin Sulayman Bin Muslim al-Muwallad and 'Issa bin Muhammad 'Umar Muhammad have been sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were both 17 years old. Saudi Arabia is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which expressly prohibits the execution of juvenile offenders – those convicted of crimes committed when they were under 18.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offences, including offences with no lethal consequences, and does so following trials which invariably fall short of the most basic international standards. Hearings are often held in secret, and defendants are permitted barely any formal legal representation. They may be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress or deception. In many cases defendants and their families are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. Prisoners under sentence of death may not be told when they are to be executed until the morning when they are taken out and beheaded.

In 2007 the authorities executed at least 158 people, of whom 76 were foreign nationals. At least 37 people, of whom 13 were foreign nationals, have been executed so far this year.

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

- expressing concern that Sultan Bin Khalid Bin Mahmud al-Maskati, Yusef Bin Hassan Bin Salman al-Muwallad, Qassim Bin 'Ali Bin Ibrahim Al-Nakhli, Sultan Bin Sulayman Bin Muslim al-Muwallad and 'Issa Bin Muhammad 'Umar Muhammad have been sentenced to death for crimes with no lethal consequences, and that two of them were under 18 at the time of the crimes of which they were convicted;
- expressing concern that Sultan Bin Sulayman Bin Muslim al-Muwallad and 'Issa bin Muhammad 'Umar Muhammad have been sentenced to flogging, a cruel and inhuman form of punishment, for crimes committed when they were under 18;
- reminding the authorities that they are bound by international standards for fair trial in capital cases, in particular the UN Safeguards Guaranteeing the Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death Penalty, which guarantee adequate opportunity for defence and appeal, and prohibit the imposition of the death penalty when there is room for alternative interpretation of the evidence;
- urging the King to commute the death sentences, especially those of juvenile offenders Sultan Bin Sulayman Bin Muslim al-Muwallad and 'Issa bin Muhammad 'Umar Muhammad, as Saudi Arabia is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- calling for the sentences of flogging against Bilal Bin Muslih Bin Jabir al-Muwallad and Ahmad Hamid Muhammad Sabir to be commuted to a humane punishment, as Saudi Arabia is a state party to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

APPEALS TO: Please note that you may experience difficulties sending faxes on Thursdays and Fridays, which are the weekend in Saudi Arabia.

His Majesty King Abdullah Bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud

The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques

Office of His Majesty the King

Royal Court, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Fax: (via Ministry of the Interior) +966 1 403 1185 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Your Majesty

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud

Minister of the Interior

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Salutation: Your Royal Highness

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud

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Salutation: Your Royal Highness

COPIES TO:

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and 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 14 May 2008.