

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 175/07 (MDE 23/026/2007, 05 July 2007) – Death sentence

SAUDI ARABIA

Rizana Nafeek (f), aged 19, Sri Lankan national

A court in Saudi Arabia is reported to be considering Sri Lankan domestic worker Rizana Nafeek's appeal against her death sentence. If the sentence is upheld, she could be at imminent risk of execution. This concern is heightened as the rate of executions has increased in 2008, with at least 25 people, including three women, executed since 8 January. At least 158 people, including three women, were executed in 2007.

Rizana Nafeek was sentenced to death on 16 June 2007 for a murder committed while she was 17 years old. Saudi Arabia is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which prohibits the execution of offenders for crimes committed when they were under 18 years old.

Rizana Nafeek was arrested in May 2005 on charges of murdering an infant in her care. She had no access to lawyers either during interrogation or at her trial, and it is believed that she confessed to the murder during police questioning, only to later retract her confession.

She apparently told the authorities that she was born in February 1988, but they seem to have ignored this on the basis that her passport indicated that she was born in February 1982. According to information available to Amnesty International she was not allowed to present her birth certificate or other evidence of her age.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offences. Court proceedings fall far short of international standards for fair trial, and take place behind closed doors.

Defendants normally do not have formal representation by a lawyer, and in many cases are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. They may be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress, torture or deception.

Saudi Arabia assured the Committee on the Rights of the Child (which monitors states' implementation of the CRC) in January 2006 that no children had been executed in the country since the CRC came into force in Saudi Arabia in 1997. This is a weaker commitment than is required by the CRC, which demands that capital punishment not be imposed for offences committed by persons below 18 years of age, no matter how old they are when the sentence is actually carried out.

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

- noting reports that Rizana Nafeek's appeal against her death sentence is currently under consideration;
- expressing concern that Rizana Nafeek's birth certificate gives her date of birth as February 1988, meaning that she was 17 at the time of her alleged crime;
- pointing out that the execution of juvenile offenders is prohibited by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Saudi Arabia ratified in 1996;
- calling on the authorities to commute her death sentence immediately.

APPEALS TO:

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
Salutation: Your Majesty

His Royal Highness Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of the Interior
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Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 1 403 1185
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz Al-Saud
Minister of Foreign Affairs
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Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
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Salutation: Your Royal Highness

COPIES TO:

Mr Turki bin Khaled Al-Sudairy
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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 21 March 2008.