

URGENT ACTION

14 SAUDI ARABIAN MEN AT IMMINENT RISK OF EXECUTION

Fourteen Saudi Arabian men are at imminent risk of execution after their families learned on 23 July that the Supreme Court has ratified their death sentences. On 1 June 2016, the men were sentenced to death penalty after a grossly unfair trial based on “confessions” they said were obtained under torture.

Hussein al-Rabi’, Abdullah al-Tureif, Hussein al-Mosallem, Mohamed al-Naser, Mustafa al-Darwish, Fadel Labbad, Sa’id al-Sakafi, Salman al-Qureish, Mujtaba al-Suweyket, Munir al-Adam, Abdullah al-Asreeh, Ahmad al-Darwish, Abdulaziz al-Sahwi, and Ahmad al-Rab’i have had their death sentences upheld by the Supreme Court in Riyadh. Due to the lack of information surrounding the judicial process in Saudi Arabia, it is only when the families of some of the men finally managed to get through to the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC), on 23 July by phone, that they learned the sentences of their relatives had been upheld. This means that the 14 men could be executed as soon as the King ratifies the sentences. The ratification process is secretive and could happen at any time. On 15 July, the 14 men were transferred to the capital Riyadh without prior notice.

The 14 men were sentenced to death on 1 June 2016, following a grossly unfair mass trial of 24 Saudi Arabian Shi’a Muslims. They were found guilty of violent offences related to their alleged participation in anti-government demonstrations in Saudi Arabia’s Shi’a majority Eastern Province between 2011 and 2012. They were convicted of a range of charges that included “armed rebellion against the ruler” by among other things “participating in shooting at security personnel, security vehicles”, “preparing and using Molotov Cocktail bombs”, “theft and armed robbery” and “inciting chaos, organizing and participating in riots”.

Court documents show that the 14 men were subjected to prolonged pre-trial detention and the men alleged they had been tortured and ill-treated during their interrogation to extract their “confessions”. However, the judge failed to order investigations into their allegations. The SCC appears to have largely based its decision on these “confessions”.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the Saudi Arabian authorities to halt the execution of the 14 men and quash their conviction, given grave concerns about the fairness of the trial, to retry them in line with international fair trial standards without recourse to the death penalty;
- Calling on them to order a prompt, impartial, independent and effective investigation into the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment;
- Urging them to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 SEPTEMBER 2017 TO:

King and Prime Minister
His Majesty King Salman 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 Interior)
+966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)
Twitter: @KingSalman
Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Interior
His Royal Highness Prince Abdul Aziz bin Saud bin Naif
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 403 3125
Twitter: @MOISaudiArabia
Salutation: Your Highness

And copies to:
Human Rights Commission
Bandar Mohammed ‘Abdullah al-Aiban
P.O. Box 58889, Riyadh 11515
King Fahd Road
Building No. 3, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 418 510

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdul Aziz - Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in London, Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 30 Charles Street, Mayfair, London, W1J 5DZ tel: 020 7917 3000 or 02079173288, fax 02079173113 email: ukemb@mofa.gov.sa complete the webform here:

<http://embassies.mofa.gov.sa/sites/uk/EN/ContactDiplomaticMission/Pages/ContactWithDiplomaticMission.aspx>; twitter: @SaudiEmbassyUK, Salutation: Your Royal Highness **Please check with your section office if sending**

appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 180/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6769/2017/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

According to the Saudi Arabian judicial system, when a death sentence is imposed by a lower court, it should be first upheld by an appeal court before being automatically sent to the Supreme Court, where the verdict becomes final after being upheld. The case will then be sent to the King for ratification rendering the execution imminent. In practice, the Supreme Court's role is to check the formalities of the procedures in lower courts and not to review case details per se unless they relate to misapplied regulations by lower court judges. Usually, all these steps are taken without thoroughly informing the defendants, their lawyers and their families. The Saudi Arabian authorities, routinely fail to inform families of the imminent execution of a family member, and they also do not directly inform them of executions after they have been carried out.

Since 2013, Amnesty International has recorded a spike in the use of death sentences against political dissidents in Saudi Arabia, including the Shi'a Muslim minority. On 2 January 2016, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr was executed along with 46 other prisoners. Only on 11 July, Yussuf Ali al-Mushaikhass, a father of two, was executed along with three other Shi'a men, for terror-related offences in connection with their participation in anti-government protests in the Eastern Province. His family was not informed of the execution in advance, only finding out about it afterwards when they saw a government statement read on TV. See Amnesty International's Urgent Action: Saudi Arabian man executed, 18 July 2017: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/6748/2017/en/>

Saudi Arabians in the Kingdom's predominantly Shi'a Eastern Province have long complained of discrimination and harassment by the authorities. Inspired in part by protests that swept across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, they organized demonstrations to protest against this discrimination. But Saudi Arabian authorities have taken repressive measures against people they suspect of taking part in or supporting protests, or expressing views critical of the state. Protesters have been held incommunicado and without charge for days or weeks at a time, and some have said they were tortured and otherwise ill-treated. The security forces have killed at least 20 people connected with protests in the Eastern Province since 2011, and imprisoned hundreds.

At least 18 men are currently sentenced to death for protests related crimes, including four who were convicted of offences committed when they were under 18. Their trials fall far short of international fair trial standards. Defendants were rarely allowed formal representation by lawyers, and in many cases were not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. They were convicted solely on the basis of "confessions" obtained under duress or torture.

The detention and trial of the 24 men is not an exception. According to court documents, all defendants were subject to prolonged pre-trial detention, placed in solitary confinement and incommunicado detention. They gave the court detailed accounts of their treatment during interrogations, including being beaten on the back, slapped in the face, and forced to stand against a wall for prolonged periods in order to force them to "confess". Some said that they were threatened with further torture when they refused to sign their "confession" in front of the authenticating judge. However, the SCC judges failed to order investigations into the allegations and in virtually all instances dismissed the allegations completely. Nine other men in the same case were handed prison sentences ranging from three to 14 years in prison followed by a travel ban of equal duration. One man was acquitted.

Further information on UA: 180/17 Index: MDE 23/6783/2017 Issue Date: 24 July 2017

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