

URGENT ACTION

JUVENILE OFFENDERS RISK EXECUTION

Two Saudi Arabian Shi'a activists, arrested when they were under 18 years old, risk being executed as soon as the King ratifies their death sentences. They were moved to solitary confinement on 5 October and have been held incommunicado since then.

Shi'a activists **Abdullah Hasan al-Zaher** and **Dawood Hussein al-Marhoon** were moved to solitary confinement in al-Ha'ir prison on 5 October, where they have since been held incommunicado. They were sentenced to death on 22 October 2014 by the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in the capital, Riyadh, which had convicted them of offences that included "participating in the marches and gatherings of the Awamiyya riots", "chanting slogans against the State with the intent of destabilizing the security of the country and overturning its system of government", "participating in killing of police officers by making and using Molotov cocktails to attack them" and "carrying out an armed robbery".

Throughout their pre-trial detention, both activists were denied access to their lawyer, who was only allowed to meet them at the second court hearing. Both the appeal court and the Supreme Court upheld their sentences earlier this year, without telling them.

Abdullah al-Zaher and Dawood al-Marhoon were arrested on 3 March and 22 May 2012, when they were 16 and 17 years old respectively. Both were taken to the juvenile rehabilitation centre (Dar al-Mulahaza) in Dammam, in the Eastern Province, where they were held until they reached the age of 18. They were then moved to the General Directorate of Investigations (GDI) prison in Damman. They were interrogated without access to a lawyer and state that they were tortured by GDI officers to force them to "confess".

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

- Urging the authorities to quash the conviction and death sentence of Abdullah Hasan al-Zaher and Dawood Hussein al-Marhoon, and ensure that they are retried in line with international law and standards and without recourse to the death penalty;
- Calling on them to order an independent investigation into the men's allegations of torture and other ill-treatment;
- Reminding them that Saudi Arabia is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which strictly prohibits the use of the death penalty for crimes committed by anyone below the age of 18;
- Urging them to establish immediately an official moratorium on all executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 NOVEMBER 2015 TO:

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

Minister of Interior
His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Minister of Interior
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 403 3125 (please keep trying)
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
President, Human Rights Commission
Bandar Mohammed 'Abdullah al-Aiban
Human Rights Commission
PO Box 58889, Riyadh 11515
King Fahd Road
Building No. 3, Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 418 5101
Email: info@hrc.gov.sa

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

JUVENILE OFFENDERS RISK EXECUTION

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia is one of the most prolific executioners in the world, putting more than 2,200 people to death between 1985 and 2015. So far this year it has executed at least 136 people, almost half of them for offences that do not meet the threshold of “most serious crimes” for which the death penalty can be imposed under international law.

Saudi Arabia also sentences people to death, and executes them, for crimes committed when they were below 18 years of age, in violation of the country’s obligations under customary international law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The authorities repeatedly fail to abide by international standards for fair trial and UN Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty. Trials in death penalty cases are often held in secret and their proceedings are unfair and frequently summary, with no legal assistance or representation for those accused through the various stages of detention and trial. Defendants may be convicted solely on the basis of “confessions” obtained under torture or other ill-treatment.

Tensions between the Shi’a Muslim community and the Saudi Arabian authorities have increased since 2011 when, inspired in part by protests that swept the Middle East and North Africa region, Saudi Arabians in the Kingdom’s predominantly Shi’a Eastern Province stepped up public calls for reforms.

The Saudi Arabian authorities have responded with repressive measures against those suspected of taking part in or supporting protests or expressing views critical of the state. Protesters have been held without charge and incommunicado for days or weeks at a time, and some are reported to have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated. Nearly 20 people connected with protests in the Eastern Province have been killed by the security forces since 2011 and hundreds have been imprisoned. Of those whose cases have gone to trial, many have been charged solely with taking part in demonstrations.

Among those sentenced to death in relation to the protests are the prominent Shi’a cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, and his nephew Ali al-Nimr, who was 17 at the time of his arrest.

Ali al-Nimr was sentenced to death on 27 May 2014 by the SCC in Jeddah, for charges similar to those levelled against Dawood al-Marhoon and Abdullah al-Zaher. (See UA 143/14, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/014/2014/en/>) The court seems to have based its decision on “confessions” which Ali al-Nimr has said were extracted under torture. The court has refused to look into this allegation. Ali al-Nimr was arrested on 14 February 2012, when he was 17 years old, and taken to the GDI prison in Dammam, in the Eastern Province.

Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr was sentenced to death by the SCC on 15 October 2014 for a list of offences including “disobeying and breaking allegiance to the ruler”, “calling to overthrow the regime”, “calling for demonstrations”, “inciting sectarian strife”, “questioning the integrity of the judiciary” and “interfering in a neighbouring state’s affairs” (meaning Bahrain). His trial that began at the SCC on 25 March 2013 was deeply flawed (see UA 271/14, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/028/2014/en/>).

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. It violates the right to life, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Names: Dawood al-Marhoon, Abdullah al-Zaher
Gender m/f: m

UA: 229/15 Index: MDE 23/2671/2015 Issue Date: 15 October 2015