

# URGENT ACTION



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5 August 2008

UA 215/08

## Death sentences/Flogging

SAUDI ARABIA

Edison Gonzales (m), aged 46]  
Rolando Manaloto Gonzales (m), aged 48]  
Eduardo Arcilla (m), aged 46]  
Victoriano Alfonso (m), aged 48] Filipino nationals  
Efren Francisco Dimaun (m), aged 49]  
Omar Basillo (m), aged 42]  
Joel Sinamban (m), aged 40]

Edison Gonzales, Rolando Manaloto Gonzales and Eduardo Arcilla have been sentenced to death, and Victoriano Alfonso, Efren Francisco Dimaun, Omar Basillo and Joel Sinamban have been sentenced to imprisonment and flogging, in the same case and after an unfair trial. The seven, all Filipino nationals, are appealing against their sentences. If their appeals are rejected, and the King confirms the death sentences, three of the men could face imminent execution and the four others could be flogged within weeks.



All seven men were tried by a General Court in Jeddah for the murders of three other Filipino nationals, Romeo Lumbang, Jeremias Bucud and Dante Rivero, and were sentenced by the same court in July 2007. Eduardo Arcilla and brothers Edison Gonzales and Rolando Manaloto Gonzales were sentenced to death. Victoriano Alfonso, Efren Francisco Dimaun, Omar Basillo, and Joel Sinamban were sentenced to eight years' imprisonment and one thousand lashes each.

The seven men, all migrant workers, were arrested in April 2006. They were held incommunicado and were not given access to lawyers until April 2008 in order to help submit their appeals. They were also said to have been tortured during interrogation, including being beaten on the soles of their feet, in order to force them to confess to the murders. They are held at Briman Prison in Jeddah.

If the flogging sentences are upheld, they will be administered in sets of 50, with intervals of at least two weeks between sets.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offenses, including offenses with no lethal consequences, and it is imposed following trials which invariably fail to meet the most basic international standards of trial fairness. Court hearings are often held in secret and defendants are scarcely permitted formal representation by a lawyer. They may be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress, torture 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 informed of the date of execution until the morning when they are taken out and beheaded.

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*Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.*

At least 66 people have been executed so far this year, almost half of whom have been foreign nationals. Foreign workers, notably those from poorer countries, are particularly at risk of unfair criminal proceedings, because they have no relatives to turn to for help, and because non-Arabic speakers may also be forced to sign confessions without the provision of adequate interpretation to help them understand what they are signing.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:**

- expressing concern that Edison Gonzales, Rolando Manaloto Gonzales, Eduardo Arcilla have been sentenced to death; and Victoriano Alfonso, Efren Francisco Dimaun, Omar Basillo and Joel Sinamban have been sentenced to imprisonment and flogging;
- noting reports that the seven men have appealed against their sentences;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that the seven men have access to lawyers of their own choosing to present their appeals, and are given an effective opportunity to exercise their right to defense and appeal against their sentences in fair and transparent trial hearings;
- reminding the authorities that they are bound by international standards for fair trial, including the United Nations safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, which guarantees adequate opportunity for defense, appeal and prohibits the imposition of the death penalty when there is room for alternative interpretation of the evidence;
- urging the King to commute their sentences if they are upheld on appeal.

**APPEALS TO:**

*Please note that you may experience difficulties sending faxes on Thursdays and Fridays, which is 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)  
011 966 1 403 1185 (please keep trying)  
Salutation: Your Majesty**

His Royal Highness  
Prince Naif bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz Al-Saud  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
P.O. Box 2933  
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134,  
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

**Fax: 011 966 1 403 1185  
(please keep trying)  
Salutation: Your Royal Highness**

His Royal Highness  
Prince Saud al-Faisal bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz Al-Saud  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
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Riyadh 11124, KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA  
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**COPIES TO:**

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President, Human Rights Commission  
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Riyadh, KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA  
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**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**

**Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 16 September 2008.**