

URGENT ACTION



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05 December 2008

UA 334/08

Death Penalty/Fear of imminent execution

SAUDI ARABIA

Bahjat Khalid Mas'ud (m) aged 35, Syrian national

At least 37 other Syrian nationals

Bahjat Khalid Mas'ud, a father of five, is one of at least 38 Syrian nationals feared to be at imminent risk of execution. They were all sentenced to death – in Bahjat Khalid Mas'ud's case, over six years ago – on drug-related charges following secret and summary trial proceedings.

None of the Syrian nationals have been allowed access to lawyers or other legal assistance since their arrests. They are said to have exhausted all appeal procedures available to them and their cases are now pending ratification by the King, as head of the Supreme Judicial Council, before the executions are carried out.

The Syrian nationals are believed to have been held in al-Qurayyat Prison, in the province of al-Jawf, north-western Saudi Arabia, but some are said to have been moved recently to unknown places of detention, raising fears among their relatives and friends in Syria that this may be part of the preparation for their executions.



Since 30 September, the last day of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, during which the Saudi Arabian authorities suspended the implementation of death sentences, Amnesty International has recorded at least 15 executions, bringing the total number for 2008 to at least 92.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offenses. Court proceedings fall far short of international standards for fair trial. Defendants are rarely allowed 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 or deception. Prisoners under sentence of death may be executed without a scheduled date for execution being made known to them or their families.

In a recent report on the use of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia, Amnesty International highlighted the extensive use of the death penalty as well as the disproportionately high number of executions of foreign nationals from poor and developing countries. For further information please see *Saudi Arabia: Affront to Justice: Death Penalty in Saudi Arabia* (Index: MDE 23/027/2008), issued on 14 October 2008: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/saudi-arabia-executions-target-foreign-nationals-20081014>

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.

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

- urging the King, as the head of the Supreme Judicial Council, not to approve the death sentences against Bahjat Khalid Mas'ud and at least 37 other Syrian nationals and thereby halt their execution;
- calling on the King to commute their death sentences and those of all others under sentence of death in Saudi Arabia as a matter of urgency, with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

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)
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
Nasseriya Street
Riyadh 11124
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Fax: 011 966 1 403 0645

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

COPIES TO:

Turki bin Khaled Al-Sudairy
President
Human Rights Commission
P.O. Box 58889
King Fahad Road, Building No. 373
Riyadh 11515
KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Fax: 011 966 1 4612061

Ambassador Adel A. Al-Jubeir
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
601 New Hampshire Ave. NW
Washington DC 20037

Fax: 1 202 944 3113

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PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.