

URGENT ACTION

“NATIONAL SECURITY” TRIALS END IN LIFE SENTENCES

Oman sentenced six defendants to life imprisonment for “infringement of the country’s independence or unity or the sanctity of its territory” after grossly unfair trials. The charges were based on the six men’s online browsing habits in relation to Oman’s Musandam province and the Shuhuh tribe that lives there. Following the trials, credible allegations of torture emerged. However, the verdicts were summarily upheld by an appeals court. No further appeals are possible.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

The six defendants are members of the Shuhuh tribe. Four are from Musandam province in Oman and two from across the border in the UAE. All received life sentences in verdicts issued between 27 August and 5 November 2018.

The convictions were based on Article 125 of the Penal Code, which mandates life imprisonment or execution of “anyone intentionally committing an act which leads to the infringement of the country’s independence or unity or the sanctity of its territory,” and Article 19 of the Law on Combating Information Technology Crimes, which criminalizes publication (or even possession) of Internet material “infringing on religious values or public order.” Among the allegations raised against the defendant Mohammed Abdullah al-Shahi was that he had attempted to communicate with international organizations, including Amnesty International, about the situation in Musandam.

Other prisoners reported that the defendants were coerced into giving “confessions” via methods of abuse including subjection to stress positions for periods of three to six days in a row and different forms of sensory assault (sleep deprivation and extended exposure to blinding lights, complete darkness, and/or loud noises). Some of the defendants are said to have had difficulty walking afterwards; one reportedly had to be transferred to a police hospital for treatment.

Following sentencing the defendants were transferred to Samail prison, in the mountains west of Muscat. Conditions there are poor. Appropriate meals are not provided for inmates with diabetes; prisoners receive one worn uniform per year; and prisoners with illnesses do not receive their prescribed medications but are restricted to the limited dispensary kept on stock at Samail. Rashed Saeed al-Shahi, Mohammed Abdullah al-Shahi, and Mohammed Sulaiman al-Shahi were all held in solitary confinement for several weeks, and are now in a cellblock containing around 220 prisoners. All six prisoners were prevented from communicating with their families for three weeks in January.

All the defendants appealed their sentences, but the court summarily rejected all six appeals on 29 January 2019. No substantive court sessions were held, and no one affected was informed of the decision; the attorney found out weeks later when he went to inquire on the status of the case. No further appeal is possible.

Amnesty International members sent letters to Omani authorities protesting the prisoners’ treatment, and the International Secretariat has formally raised the case with [Oman Human Rights Commission](#). Amnesty International will continue to monitor the case and advocate for the prisoners’ release.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ali Ahmed al-Shahi; Ali Mohammed al-Shahi; Mohammed Abdullah al-Shahi; Mohammed Sulaiman al-Shahi; Aref Sultan al-Shahi; Rashed Saeed al-Shahi (all male)

THIS IS THE THIRD AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 121/18

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE2091272018ENGLISH.pdf>