

PUBLIC
EXTRA 20/03 **Death Penalty**

AI Index: MDE 12/015/2003
31 March 2003

EGYPT **Hanan Muhammad Rashid (f), lawyer**
 Muhammad Ahmad 'Abd al-Salam (m)

Hanan Muhammad Rashid and Muhammad Ahmad 'Abd al-Salam are at imminent risk of execution. On 9 March, they were sentenced to death following an appeal, for the murder of Hanan Muhammad Rashid's husband in August 1998.

They were sentenced by the Shibin al-Kum Criminal Court, north of Cairo. The death sentence has been passed on to the Mufti, the highest religious authority in Egypt for his opinion. The final verdict will be sent to the President, who has the right to grant a pardon or commute the sentence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Egyptian courts have increased their use of the death penalty in the last few years, despite the world trend towards abolition. At least 48 people, including five women, were sentenced to death in 2002, and at least 17 people are known to have been executed. Crimes punishable by death include offences under so-called "anti-terrorism" legislation, premeditated murder, as well as rape and drug related offences.

In November 2002, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concerns about "the very large number of offences which, under Egyptian law, are punishable by the death penalty" and recommended that Egypt reviews the question of the death penalty.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life. The death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments and is brutalizing to all involved in its application. More than 100 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send

appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic, English or your own language:

- acknowledging the seriousness of the crime of which Hanan Muhammad Rashid and Muhammad Ahmad 'Abd al-Salam were convicted, but pointing out that it has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect, and is brutalizing to all involved in its application;
- explaining your opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life as stated in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person";
- urging the Mufti not to ratify the death sentences or any others that come before him;
- urging the President to use his constitutional powers to grant clemency and commute these and all other pending death sentences;
- drawing attention to the world trend towards abolishing or reducing the use of the death penalty, in accordance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Egypt is a state party.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Mohammad Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

'Abedine Palace, Cairo, Egypt

Telegram: President Mubarak, Cairo, Egypt

E-mail: webmaster@presidency.gov.eg

Fax: + 202 390 1998

Telex: 93794 WAZRA UN

Salutation: Your Excellency

M. Ahmed Mohamed El-Tayeb

Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt

Wakf Ministry

Sabri Abou Alam Street

Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt

Telegram: Mufti of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Cairo, Egypt

Fax: + 202 392 6155 (If somebody picks up the phone, please ask them to turn the fax machine on)

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Egypt accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 May 2003.