

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 60/01

Fear of flogging

3 September 2001

SAUDI ARABIA Robin (m), Filipino national
 Nora (f), Filipino national

Amnesty International fears that the married couple named above will be flogged after being convicted of "involvement in prostitution" by a summary court in Jouf, in the north of the country. According to Saudi Arabian press reports of 1 September, the individuals, named only as Robin and Nora, were sentenced to 90 lashes as well as three months imprisonment, to be followed by deportation to the Philippines. Amnesty International does not know the precise charges upon which their convictions were made.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Flogging is mandatory in Saudi Arabia for a number of offences, including sexual offences, and can also be used at the discretion of judges as an alternative or addition to other punishments. Sentences can range from dozens to thousands of lashes.

To date this year, Amnesty International has recorded at least 80 cases of floggings being carried out in Saudi Arabia, with the number of lashes ranging between 10 and 70 in each case.

In 1997, the United Nations commission on human rights stated that "corporal punishment [such as flogging] can amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment, or even to torture". As a state party to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), Saudi Arabia is in violation of this international standard by carrying out the punishment of flogging.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Arabic or your own language:

- expressing concern at the reports that Robin and Nora are to be flogged and calling for the sentences not to be carried out;
- asking to know the precise charges against them, together with details of their trial proceedings and the evidence produced against them;
- asking whether they have been allowed defence lawyers of their own choosing, and whether they are allowed to appeal against their convictions and sentences;
- stating that you consider the use of flogging as punishment to be cruel, inhuman and degrading, contrary to CAT and Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."
- seeking assurances that they will be provided with access to family, legal and consular access in detention, as well as regular medical attention as and when it is necessary;

APPEALS TO:

The Custodian of the Two Holy Shrines

His Majesty King Fahd bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Office of H.M. The King, Royal Court, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: King Fahd, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Telexes: 201039 CABINET SJ

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of the Interior

His Royal Highness, Prince Naif bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior
PO Box 2933, Airport Road, Riyadh 11134, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Faxes: + 966 1 403 1185

Telexes: 401622 MORS SJ or 202811 INFORM SJ

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Royal Highness, Prince Saud al-Faisal bin 'Abdul 'Aziz
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Nasseriya Street, Riyadh 11124
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Foreign Affairs Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Faxes: + 966 1 403 0159

Telexes: 405000 MFA SJ

Salutation: Your Royal Highness

Minister of Justice

His Excellency, Dr. 'Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice
University Street, Riyadh 11137, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Faxes: + 966 1 401 1741

Telexes: 404450 JUSTIC SJ

Salutation: Your Excellency

and to diplomatic representatives of Saudi Arabia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 October 2001.