

PUBLIC

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UA 108/08 Death penalty/ unfair trial

SAUDI ARABIA Sabri Bogday (m), aged 30, Turkish national

Turkish national Sabri Bogday has been sentenced to death on charges of blasphemy after an unfair trial. He is appealing against the decision, but if the Appeal Court rejects his appeal, and the King confirms his sentence, he could be facing imminent execution.

Sabri Bogday, who is married with a 17-month-old son, owns a barber's shop in the city of Jeddah. He was arrested on 11 March 2007 after police received complaints that he had insulted Islam, including by swearing at God in public. Under Saudi Arabian law, insulting God and the Islamic religion can be considered as apostasy or heresy, both of which are criminal offences punishable by death.

Sabri Bogday, who is not a fluent Arabic speaker, was sentenced to death on 31 March 2008, after an unfair trial before a closed court in Jeddah. He was not permitted to have access to a lawyer during trial proceedings and no translator was present during the trial. He is held at Briman Prison in Jeddah.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offences, including offences with no lethal consequences, and does so following trials which invariably fall short of the most basic international standards. Hearings are often held in secret, and defendants are permitted barely any formal legal representation. They may be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress 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.

The number of executions in 2008 continues to increase rapidly. At least 50 people have been executed so far this year, 20 of whom have been foreign nationals.

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

- expressing concern about Sabri Bogday's death sentence and calling for it to be commuted immediately if it is upheld on appeal;
- reminding the authorities that they are bound by international standards for fair trial, and in capital cases they are also bound by the United Nations safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, which guarantees adequate opportunity for defence and appeal.

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) +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: +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: +966 1 403 0645
Salutation: Your Royal Highness

COPIES TO:

Mr Turki bin Khaled Al-Sudairy
President
Human Rights Commission
PO Box 58889, Riyadh 11515
King Fahad Road, Building No.373
Riyadh
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 1 4612061

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 4 June 2008.