

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 51/00

Death Penalty

26 May 2000

KUWAIT

Vita Sishabi
Maskanta Murthi

The two Asian men named above have reportedly had their death sentences upheld by the Kuwaiti Supreme Court, and could soon be executed. Their sentences must now be ratified by the Amir, who alone has the power to commute death sentences.

Vita Sishabi and Maskanta Murthi were reportedly sentenced to death by a Kuwaiti court after they confessed to murdering an Asian woman to steal her jewellery.

Amnesty International recognises the rights and responsibilities of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty in all cases, as the ultimate violation of the right to life.

At least 12 people were sentenced to death in 1999 for murder and drug offences in Kuwait. In February 2000 a Kuwaiti man was executed for murder and at least four others have been sentenced to death this year. Since the death penalty was reintroduced in 1964 at least 22 people have been executed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Arabic, English or your own language:

- urging the Amir to commute the death sentences imposed on Vita Sishabi and Maskanta Murthi;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of crime and their relatives, and acknowledging the role of governments in bringing the perpetrators of such crimes to justice, but expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty, which has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect and which is brutalizing to all involved in its application;
- calling for all outstanding death sentences in Kuwait to be commuted to more humane sentences.

APPEALS TO:

1) His Highness Shaikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah
Amir of the State of Kuwait
Al-Safat, Kuwait City, Kuwait
Fax: +965 539 6434
Salutation: Your Highness

2) His Highness Shaikh Sa'ad a;- 'Abdullah al-Sabah
Crown Prince and Prime Minister
Al-Diwan al-Amiri
Al-Safat, Kuwait City, Kuwait
Salutation: Your Highness

3) His Excellency Dr Saad Jassem Yousef al-Hashel
Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs
Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs
PO Box 6, Al-Safat 13001
Kuwait City, Kuwait

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Fax: +965 246 6957

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

1)Local human rights group

Chairman, Sami al-Munayyeh

Committee for the Defence of Human Rights

The National Assembly (Parliament)

Kuwait City

Fax: +965 241 6538

Newspapers

Al-Qabas

PO Box 21800

Kuwait City 13078

Fax: +965 483 4355

Al Watan

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Al-Safat

Kuwait City

Fax: +965 483 5426

Kuwaiti News Agency (KUNA)

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and to diplomatic representatives of Kuwait accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 June 2000.