

PUBLIC

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Death Penalty

28 October 2002

QATAR

Firas Nassuh Salim Al-Majali (m), journalist

Jordanian national Firas Nassuh Salim Al-Majali, a journalist with the Qatari Television network, was sentenced to death on 22 October. He was convicted and sentenced by the Criminal Court in the capital Doha on charges of spying for Jordanian intelligence. His lawyers have apparently lodged an appeal, which is expected to be heard at the beginning of November.

Firas Nassuh Salim Al-Majali was reportedly convicted and sentenced after a grossly unfair trial. He is reported to have been detained incommunicado for long periods after his arrest at the beginning of 2002, and was denied access to a lawyer during his interrogation. He is allegedly still being held in solitary confinement. This violated Qatar's laws and the UN Resolution 1984/50 on safeguards guaranteeing the protection of those facing the death penalty.

Amnesty International is concerned that Firas Nassuh Salim Al-Majali may be a victim of deteriorating political relations between Jordan and Qatar. As such, the organization fears he may be a prisoner of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Until 2001, when three people were put to death, there had been no executions in Qatar for 10 years. Amnesty International is concerned to see Qatar resume its use of the death penalty at a time when other states are considering more humane alternatives to this brutalising and irrevocable punishment. At least 19 people convicted in connection with a coup attempt in 1996 are believed to be currently under sentence of death.

Over the past two years, relations between Qatar and Jordan have been marred by political differences over a number of issues. This included a rift over a television program on the Jordanian Royal Family, which was broadcast by the Qatar-based *al-Jazeera* television station.

While acknowledging the right and responsibility of all governments to bring to justice those guilty of recognizably criminal offences, Amnesty International is fundamentally opposed to the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate violation of the right to life, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Amnesty International also works for the release of prisoners of conscience (people detained for expressing their opinion, for their political affiliation, race, colour, religion, nationality etc. and who have not used or advocated violence) and calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

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

- urging the Amir to commute the death sentence against Firas Nassuh Salim Al-Majali;
- expressing concern that Firas Nassuh Salim Al-Majali may have been convicted and sentenced solely for political differences between the governments of Qatar and Jordan, and if this is the case he should be released without delay;
- urging the authorities to give details of the charges against him together with the evidence produced by the prosecution;
- seeking information about his condition of detention and assurances that he is protected from torture and ill-treatment.

APPEALS TO:

His Highness Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani

Amir of the State of Qatar

PO Box 923

Doha, Qatar

Telegrams: Amir, Doha, Qatar

Fax: + 974 4 36 12 12

Salutation: Your Highness

COPIES TO:

His Highness Shaikh Abdullah bin Khalifa Al-Thani

Prime Minister and Minister of Interior

PO Box 115

Doha, Qatar

Fax: + 974 4 32 71 77

His Excellency Hassan bin Abdullah Al-Ghanem

Minister of Justice

PO Box 917

Doha, Qatar

Fax: + 974 4 83 28 68

and to diplomatic representatives of Qatar accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 December 2002.