

PUBLIC

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Death sentences/Flogging

SAUDI ARABIA	Edison Gonzales (m), aged 46]
	Rolando Manaloto Gonzales (m), aged 48]
	Eduardo Arcilla (m), aged 46]
	Victoriano Alfonso (m), aged 48] Filipino nationals
	Efren Francisco Dimaun (m), aged 49]
	Omar Basillo (m), aged 42]
	Joel Sinamban (m), aged 40]

Edison Gonzales, Rolando Manaloto Gonzales and Eduardo Arcilla have been sentenced to death, and Victoriano Alfonso, Efren Francisco Dimaun, Omar Basillo and Joel Sinamban have been sentenced to imprisonment and flogging, in the same case and after an unfair trial. The seven, all Filipino nationals, are appealing against their sentences. If their appeals are rejected, and the King confirms the death sentences, three of the men could face imminent execution and the four others could be flogged within weeks.

All seven men were tried by a General Court in Jeddah for the murders of three other Filipino nationals, Romeo Lumbang, Jeremias Bucud and Dante Rivero, and were sentenced by the same court in July 2007. Eduardo Arcilla and brothers Edison Gonzales and Rolando Manaloto Gonzales were sentenced to death. Victoriano Alfonso, Efren Francisco Dimaun, Omar Basillo, and Joel Sinamban were sentenced to eight years' imprisonment and one thousand lashes each.

The seven men, all migrant workers, were arrested in April 2006. They were held incommunicado and were not given access to lawyers until April 2008 in order to help submit their appeals. They were also said to have been tortured during interrogation, including being beaten on the soles of their feet, in order to force them to confess to the murders. They are held at Briman Prison in Jeddah.

If the flogging sentences are upheld, they will be administered in sets of 50, with intervals of at least two weeks between sets.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offences, including offences with no lethal consequences, and it is imposed following trials which invariably fail to meet the most basic international standards of trial fairness. Court hearings are often held in secret and defendants are scarcely permitted formal representation by a lawyer. They may be convicted solely on the basis of confessions obtained under duress, torture 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.

At least 66 people have been executed so far this year, almost half of whom have been foreign nationals. Foreign workers, notably those from poorer countries, are particularly at risk of unfair criminal proceedings, because they have no relatives to turn to for help, and because non-Arabic speakers may also be forced to sign confessions without the provision of adequate interpretation to help them understand what they are signing.

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

- expressing concern that Edison Gonzales, Rolando Manaloto Gonzales, Eduardo Arcilla have been sentenced to death; and Victoriano Alfonso, Efrén Francisco Dimaun, Omar Basillo and Joel Sinamban have been sentenced to imprisonment and flogging;
- noting reports that the seven men have appealed against their sentences;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that the seven men have access to lawyers of their own choosing to present their appeals, and are given an effective opportunity to exercise their right to defence and appeal against their sentences in fair and transparent trial hearings;
- reminding the authorities that they are bound by international standards for fair trial, including the United Nations safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, which guarantees adequate opportunity for defence, appeal and prohibits the imposition of the death penalty when there is room for alternative interpretation of the evidence;
- urging the King to commute their sentences if they are upheld on appeal.

APPEALS TO:

Please note that you may experience difficulties sending faxes on Thursdays and Fridays, which is the weekend in Saudi Arabia.

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
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Salutation: Your Royal Highness

COPIES TO:

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 September 2008.