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# MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

## REGIONAL TRENDS

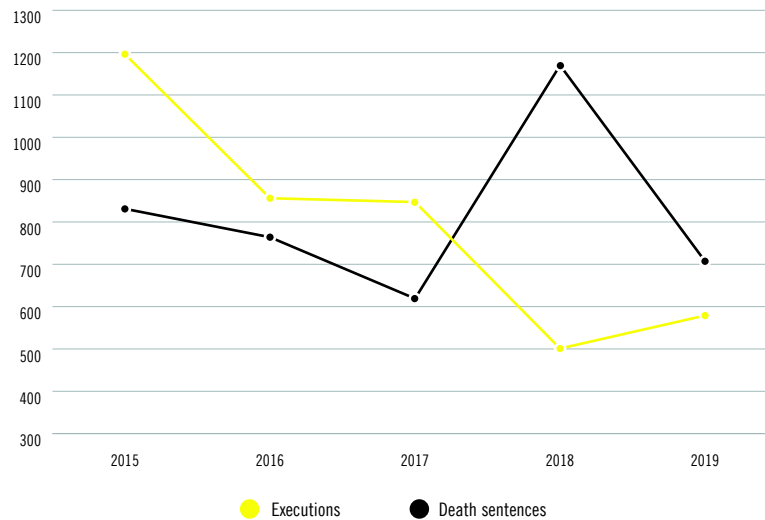
- Recorded executions increased by 16%, driven by significant increases in Iraq and Saudi Arabia.
- Seven countries carried out executions with Bahrain resuming executions after a one-year hiatus.
- Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq remained the top executing countries in the region, accounting for 92% of executions.
- There was a 40% drop in recorded death sentences, mainly due to reductions in Egypt and Iraq.
- Egypt imposed 62% of known death sentences in the region despite a drop in recorded death sentences in the country.

| COUNTRY                | 2019 RECORDED EXECUTIONS | 2019 RECORDED DEATH SENTENCES | PEOPLE KNOWN TO BE UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH AT THE END OF 2019 |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Algeria                | 0                        | 4+                            | +                                                             |
| Bahrain                | 3                        | 4+                            | 28+                                                           |
| Egypt                  | 32+                      | 435+                          | +                                                             |
| Iran                   | 251+                     | +                             | +                                                             |
| Iraq                   | 100+                     | 87+                           | 8,000+ <sup>100</sup>                                         |
| Israel                 | 0                        | 0                             | 0                                                             |
| Jordan                 | 0                        | 8+                            | 8+                                                            |
| Kuwait                 | 0                        | 5+                            | +                                                             |
| Lebanon                | 0                        | 23                            | 47+                                                           |
| Libya                  | 0                        | 0                             | +                                                             |
| Morocco/Western Sahara | 0                        | 7+                            | +                                                             |
| Oman                   | 0                        | 7+                            | +                                                             |
| Palestine (State of)   | 0                        | 4 <sup>101</sup>              | +                                                             |
| Qatar                  | 0                        | 2+                            | +                                                             |
| Saudi Arabia           | 184                      | 5+                            | +                                                             |
| Syria                  | +                        | +                             | +                                                             |
| Tunisia                | 0                        | 39+                           | +                                                             |
| United Arab Emirates   | 0                        | 18+                           | +                                                             |
| Yemen                  | 7                        | 55                            | +                                                             |

<sup>100</sup> "Iraq has executed 100 since January, 8,000 on death row: official", Rudaw, 19 August 2019, [www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/190820191](http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/190820191)

<sup>101</sup> These death sentences were imposed by courts run by the Hamas de facto administration in the Gaza Strip

## EXECUTIONS AND DEATH SENTENCES RECORDED IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA 2015-2019



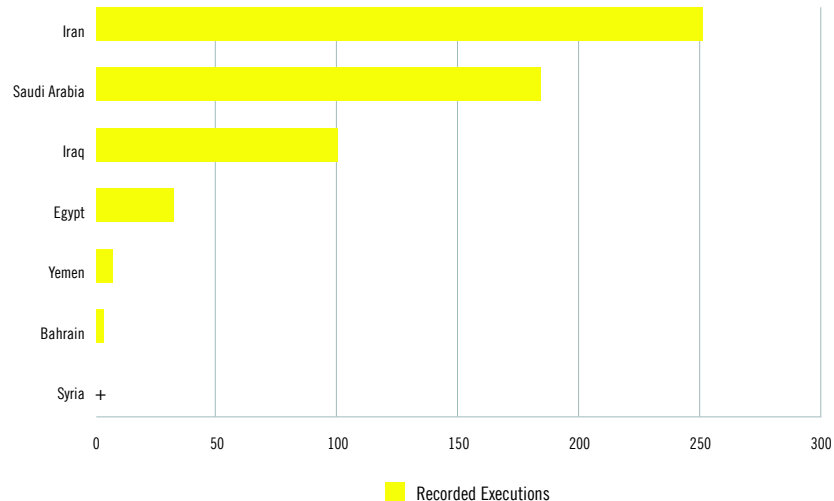
The number of executions recorded by Amnesty International in the Middle East and North Africa region increased in 2019. Recorded execution went up by 16%, from 501 in 2018 to 579 in 2019, bucking the trend of reductions in executions recorded since 2015.<sup>102</sup>

A significant increase in executions in Iraq and Saudi Arabia was largely responsible for the rise in executions in the region. Recorded executions went up by 92% in Iraq, from 52 in 2018 to 100 in 2019; and by 23% in Saudi Arabia from 149 in 2018 to 184 in 2019. Seven countries – Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen – were known to have carried out executions during the year. Bahrain resumed executions after not carrying out any in 2018. Amnesty International was able to corroborate information that executions occurred in Syria in 2019 but had insufficient information to provide a credible minimum figure. Iran – where recorded executions reduced by two in 2019 compared to 2018 – remained the top executioner in the region with 251 executions recorded; the country was followed by Saudi Arabia and Iraq, with 184 and 100 recorded executions respectively. These three countries carried out 92% of recorded executions in the region.

In 2019, Amnesty International recorded 707 death sentences in the region, a drop of 40% compared to 2018 when 1,170 death sentences were recorded. The drop in numbers was a result of a significant decrease in recorded death sentences in Egypt (from 717 in 2018 to 435 in 2019) and Iraq (from 271 in 2018 to 87 in 2019). Death sentences were recorded in all the countries in the region except in Israel – which has abolished the death penalty for ordinary crimes only but retains it for exceptional crimes – and Libya.

<sup>102</sup> In recent years Amnesty International recorded the following executions in the Middle East and North Africa region: 2014: 491; 2015: 1,196; 2016: 856; 2017: 847; 2018: 501

## EXECUTING COUNTRIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA 2019



## NOTABLE COUNTRY DEVELOPMENTS

Three of the four death sentences recorded in **Algeria** were imposed in June by a military tribunal on intelligence officers for “disclosure of state secrets” and “communicating with foreign parties”.<sup>103</sup> The fourth recorded death sentence was imposed for murder by a Tébessa Criminal Court in January.<sup>104</sup>

In **Bahrain**, Amnesty International recorded three executions and four death sentences. The three people were executed on 27 July; among them were Mohamed Hakeem al-Arab and Ahmed Issa Ahmed al-Malali whose convictions and death sentences were upheld on 28 January by an appeal court and on 6 May by the Court of Cassation. The Fourth High Criminal Court in Bahrain had convicted the two men of offences, which included “forming and joining a ‘terrorist’ group”, after a mass trial involving 60 people in January 2018. The two men had said security officers used torture and other ill-treatment to force them to sign “confessions” they had not read.<sup>105</sup> At least four people were sentenced to death: two for murder and theft, and two for drug-related offences. One of the death sentences was that of a Bahraini national convicted of robbing and killing Asian migrant labourers.<sup>106</sup> At least 28 people were under sentence of death at the end of the year.

Amnesty International recorded 32 executions and 435 death sentences in **Egypt**. The recorded executions were carried out for murder while the death sentences were imposed for crimes that included murder, terrorism-related offences, rape, assassination attempt against the President, attempted murder and inciting violence. At least 16 commutations were granted.

<sup>103</sup> “Former Algeria PM faces corruption trial as 3 officers sentenced to death”, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 12 June 2019, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1763646/former-algeria-pm-faces-corruption-trial-3-officers-sentenced-death>

<sup>104</sup> “Tébessa assassine mari aide amant verdict tombe”, *Alg24*, 28 January 2019, [www.alg24.net/tebessa-assassine-mari-aide-amant-verdict-tombe/](http://www.alg24.net/tebessa-assassine-mari-aide-amant-verdict-tombe/)

<sup>105</sup> Amnesty International, *Bahrain: Further information – two men at risk of execution* (Index: MDE 11/0341/2019)

<sup>106</sup> “Death sentence for Bahraini man who killed two Asian migrants with a hammer to steal 41 dinars”, *Al Ayam*, 30 June 2019, [www.alayam.com/online/local/802449/News.html](http://www.alayam.com/online/local/802449/News.html)

On 7 February the authorities executed three men who had been sentenced to death for the killing of a judge's son in the town of Mansoura in 2014.<sup>107</sup> The men said they had been tortured into confessing to the crime. On 13 February the authorities executed another three people who were convicted of killing a police officer in Kerdasa, Giza on 19 September 2013. One of the three men convicted was forcibly disappeared for three days before appearing before a prosecutor and being charged.<sup>108</sup> The lawyers of all the defendants claimed that the men were tortured into confessing to the murder. Also, among the recorded executions were those of nine men convicted, after a grossly unfair trial that was marred by enforced disappearances and torture, for the 2015 killing of the country's former Public Prosecutor, Hisham Barakat.<sup>109</sup>

At least 251 executions were carried out in **Iran** during the year. Executions continued to be lower than they were before the implementation of amendments to the anti-narcotics law in November 2017, which has drastically reduced the number of people executed for drug-related offences in the country. Of the 251 individuals whose executions were recorded by Amnesty International, 196 were convicted of murder; 30 were convicted of drug trafficking; 12 were convicted of rape; one was convicted of murder and rape; eight were convicted of *moharebeh* ("enmity against God"), six of them in relation to robberies and two in relation to political activities; two were convicted of *efsad f'il arz* ("spreading corruption on earth"); one was convicted of kidnapping and rape; and the crime for which one was convicted was not known. Fifteen women were executed, 10 more than recorded in 2018. Thirteen executions were carried out in public.

The Islamic Penal Code continued to provide for stoning as a method of execution, but this was not recorded as being used in 2019. Hanging was the only recorded method of execution used during the year. The death penalty was maintained for some consensual same-sex sexual conduct and sexual extramarital relationships, as well as for vaguely worded offences such as "insulting the Prophet", "enmity against God" and "spreading corruption on earth".

Iran continued to use the death penalty against people under the age of 18 at the time of the crime, contrary to international law which strictly prohibits the use of the death penalty in such cases. As a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Iran is legally obliged to treat anyone under the age of 18 as a child and ensure that they are not subjected to the death penalty. During the year Amnesty International recorded the execution of four people who were under the age of 18 at the time of the crime.

Mehdi Sohrabifar and Amin Sedaghat, two cousins, were executed on 25 April in Adelabad prison in Shiraz, Fars province, southern Iran. Both were arrested at the age of 15 and convicted on multiple rape charges following an unfair trial; they were 17 years old at the time of their execution. According to information received by Amnesty International, the teenagers were unaware that they had been sentenced to death until shortly before their executions. They bore lash marks on their bodies, indicating that they had been flogged before their deaths. Their families and lawyers were not informed about the executions in advance. They had been held in a juvenile correction centre in Shiraz since 2017. On 24 April they were transferred to Adelabad prison, apparently without knowing the reason. The same day, their families were granted a visit to see them, but they were not told that the visit was in preparation for their execution. The next day, on 25 April, the families received a call from Iran's Legal Medicine Organization, a state forensic institute, informing them of the executions and asking them to collect the bodies. The legal proceedings leading to the two boys' conviction and sentence were unfair and flagrantly violated the principles of juvenile justice. Following their arrest, they were held for two months in a police detention centre, where they said they were beaten. They also had no access to a lawyer during the investigation stage.

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107 Amnesty International, *Egypt steps up executions as six people put to death within two weeks* (Press Release, 13 February 2019), [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/egypt-steps-up-executions-as-six-people-put-to-death-within-two-weeks/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/egypt-steps-up-executions-as-six-people-put-to-death-within-two-weeks/)

108 Amnesty International, *Egypt steps up executions as six people put to death within two weeks* (Press Release, 13 February 2019), [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/egypt-steps-up-executions-as-six-people-put-to-death-within-two-weeks/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/egypt-steps-up-executions-as-six-people-put-to-death-within-two-weeks/)

109 Amnesty International, *Egypt: Execution of nine men after an unfair trial a monumental disgrace* (Press release, 20 February 2019), [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/egypt-execution-of-nine-men-after-an-unfair-trial-a-monumental-disgrace/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/02/egypt-execution-of-nine-men-after-an-unfair-trial-a-monumental-disgrace/)

Abdorrahrman Boroumand Center reported the execution of two more people in July. Amir Ali Shadabi was 17 when he was arrested, and he was subsequently convicted of murder and sentenced to death under the principle of *qesas* (“retribution in kind”), and executed on 14 July in Minab prison, Hormozgan province.<sup>110</sup> Touraj Aziz (Azizadeh) was 16 years old when he was arrested; he was convicted of murder and sentenced to death under the principle of *qesas*, and executed on 28 July in Nur prison, Mazandaran province.<sup>111</sup>

Under Iran’s Islamic Penal Code, boys aged above 15 lunar years and girls aged above nine lunar years who are convicted of murder and certain other capital crimes may be sentenced to death in the same way as adults. However, the law grants judges discretion to replace the death penalty with an alternative sentence if they find that there are doubts about the individual’s full “maturity” at the time of the crime.

During the year, Danial Zeinolabedini was at heightened risk of execution in Mahabad prison following his conviction in relation to a crime that occurred when he was 17 years old.<sup>112</sup> He was sentenced to death on 3 June 2018 after a juvenile criminal court in the city of Mahabad, West Azerbaijan province, found him guilty of participating, along with four other young men, in the murder of a man. The court rejected his lawyer’s request that he should be issued an alternative sentence to the death penalty on grounds that he had not yet attained full maturity. The court reasoned that even though “he is younger than the other defendants, all of whom were aged between 18 and 20 years old at the time of the crime, the way he speaks, argues and defends himself shows that his level of mental maturity is higher than them.” The death sentence was upheld on 27 October 2018 by the Supreme Court, and Danial Zeinolabedini’s subsequent request for a judicial review was rejected. The legal proceedings that led to his conviction were unfair and flagrantly violated the principles of juvenile justice; he was not allowed access to a lawyer during the entire period of his pre-trial detention and statements he had made without a lawyer present were used against him in court.

On 4 August, Abdullah Karmollah Chab and Ghassem Abdullah, two men from Iran’s Ahwazi Arab minority, were executed in Dezfoul prison, Khuzestan province following a grossly unfair trial which relied on “confessions” the men said were obtained under torture and other ill-treatment to convict them of *moharebeh* (“enmity against God”). Abdullah Karmollah Chab and Ghassem Abdullah were among 15 Ahwazi Arabs who were arrested following an armed attack on a religious ceremony in Safiabad, Khuzestan province on 16 October 2015. After their arrest, the men were held in solitary confinement in an unknown location for six months. In addition, within weeks of the attack and before their trial had taken place, the authorities made a series of announcements that undermined their presumption of innocence. In court, Abdullah Karmollah Chab and Ghassem Abdullah were tried alongside six other Ahwazi Arabs. The prosecution authorities accused them of involvement in an armed group called Jandolfareq, which they described as following a “Salafi Takfiri” ideology but failed to provide any evidence to show how the defendants were connected to the group. Amnesty International received credible information showing flaws in the investigation of the armed attack. These included inconsistencies between “confessions” the men said they made under torture and the evidence presented to the court. In addition, Ghassem Abdullah, who was a farmer, told his interrogators that he owned a rifle and indicated where they could find it. However, according to statements made by the arms specialist assigned to this case and a report by the security authorities, three shells found at the scene of the crime did not match the bullets found in the cartridge of the rifle that was retrieved from Ghassem Abdullah’s home. Despite these flaws, the judge presiding over their trial refused to order an investigation into their torture allegations and accepted their “confessions” as evidence to sentence them to death.

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110 Abdorrahrman Boroumand Center, *One Person’s Story: Amir Ali Shadabi* (Memorial), [www.iranrights.org/memorial/story/-8385/amir-ali-shadabi](http://www.iranrights.org/memorial/story/-8385/amir-ali-shadabi)

111 Abdorrahrman Boroumand Center, *One Person’s Story: Turaj Azizi* (Memorial), [www.iranrights.org/memorial/story/-8384/turaj-azizi](http://www.iranrights.org/memorial/story/-8384/turaj-azizi)

112 Amnesty International, *Iranian teenager at risk of execution* (Index: MDE 13/0487/2019)

In **Iraq**, Amnesty International recorded 100 executions and 87 death sentences.<sup>113</sup> All the recorded executions were carried out by the Iraqi central authorities. According to the information received from the authorities of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, no executions were carried out in the region but 45 death sentences were imposed and 13 commutations were granted. Throughout the year the mandatory death penalty was used under anti-terrorism laws for a wide range of acts that do not meet the “most serious crimes” threshold required under international law. In this regard the UN reported that imposition of the death sentences in these types of cases often followed unfair trials.<sup>114</sup>

**Kuwait** commuted five death sentences during the year. An Indian national, Arjun Athimuthu, had his death sentence commuted to life imprisonment and a Kuwaiti national had his death sentence commuted by an appeal court to 15 years in prison, which was upheld by the Court of Cassation. The death sentences of the three other people (one from India, one from Pakistan and one of unknown nationality) were commuted to life imprisonment.

According to information received by Amnesty International from the government of **Lebanon**, since January 2004 no executions have been carried out in the country. The government stated that 23 death sentences were imposed, 17 of which were imposed in the absence of the accused. The commutation applications of four people were still being considered at the end of the year. Sixteen foreign nationals were under sentence of death, 13 of whom had their death sentences imposed in their absence.

In **Morocco/Western Sahara** King Mohammed VI commuted one death sentence to life imprisonment as part of the celebrations for the 75th Anniversary of the Manifesto of Independence.<sup>115</sup> No executions have been carried out since 1993; the courts imposed at least seven death sentences in 2019.

The government of **Oman** informed Amnesty International that no executions were carried out and that death sentence(s) were imposed in 2019 but did not specify the number. Amnesty International recorded seven death sentences reported by the media.<sup>116</sup> The authorities commuted one death sentence to eight years’ imprisonment in a murder case because the family of the victim accepted *diya* (“blood money”).

In **Saudi Arabia**, 184 executions – of six women and 178 men – were carried out; this was the highest number of executions recorded by Amnesty International in one year in the country. Eighty-four of the executions were for drug-related offences; 55 for murder; 37 for terrorism-related offences; five for rape; two for beating and rape; and one for armed robbery and rape. Of the 184 people executed in 2019, 88 were Saudi Arabian nationals. The others – a majority of 52% – were foreign nationals from the following countries: Afghanistan (1); Ethiopia (1); Philippines (1); Somalia (1); Turkey (1); Bahrain (2); India (2); Chad (3); Jordan (5); Nigeria (5); Egypt (6); Syria (10); Yemen (20); Pakistan (35); and three people whose nationality was not known.

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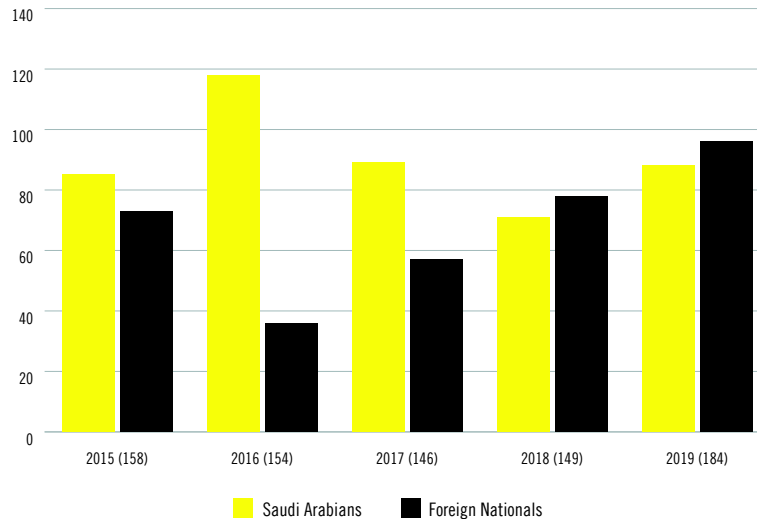
113 “Iraq has executed 100 since January, 8,000 on death row: official”, Rudaw, 19 August 2019, [www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/190820191](http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/190820191)

114 United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Human rights in the administration of justice in Iraq: Trials under the anti-terrorism laws and implications for justice, accountability and social cohesion in the aftermath of ISIL*, January 2020, [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI\\_Report\\_HRAAdministrationJustice\\_Iraq\\_28January2020.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_Report_HRAAdministrationJustice_Iraq_28January2020.pdf)

115 “King of Morocco pardons 783 prisoners”, Royal Central, 13 January 2019, <https://royalcentral.co.uk/international/king-of-morocco-pardons-783-prisoners-114089/>

116 “Death sentences in the case of wife who killed husband”, *Atheer*, 6 May 2019, [www.atheer.om/archives/497948/](http://www.atheer.om/archives/497948/); “An Omani court issues a death sentence for 5 people on this charge”, *Watanserb*, 25 February 2019, [www.watanserb.com/2019/02/25/](http://www.watanserb.com/2019/02/25/)

## EXECUTIONS RECORDED IN SAUDI ARABIA 2015-2019



The authorities continued to fail to abide by international law and standards relating to fair trial and the death penalty. Often trials in death penalty cases are held in secret and their proceedings are unfair and summary with no legal assistance or representation through the various stages of detention and trial. Defendants may be convicted solely on the basis of “confessions” obtained under torture or other ill-treatment.

The use of the death penalty as a political weapon against Shi’a dissidents increased.<sup>117</sup> On 23 April, there was a mass execution of 37 men, 32 of whom were from Saudi Arabia’s Shi’a minority. They included 11 men convicted by the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) of spying for Iran and sentenced to death after a grossly unfair trial. The 11 were among 15 men who had been convicted by the SCC in December 2016 in the “Iran Spying Cell” trial and sentenced to death on charges that included high treason, “supporting protests”, “spreading the Shi’a faith” and “possessing banned books and videos”. The mass execution also included 14 men convicted by the SCC in a mass trial for their participation in anti-government protests and a young man who was under 18 years old at the time of the crime.

<sup>117</sup> Amnesty International, *Muzzling critical voices: Politicized trials before Saudi Arabia’s Specialized Criminal Court* (Index: MDE 23/1633/2020)

## CASE OF 14 EXECUTED PROTESTERS

Among those executed on 23 April were 14 Saudi Arabian Shi'a men – Hussein al-Rabi', Abdullah al-Tureif, Hussein al-Mosallam, Mohammed al-Naser, Mustafa al-Darwish, Fadel Labbad, Sa'id al-Skafi, Salman al-Qureish, Mujtaba al-Suwayket, Munir al-Adam, Abdullah al-Asreeh, Ahmad al-Darwish, Abdulaziz al-Sahwi and Ahmad al-Rabi' – who were sentenced to death on 1 June 2016 following a grossly unfair trial of 24 men before the SCC. They were found guilty of violent offences related to their alleged participation in anti-government demonstrations in the Eastern Province between 2011 and 2012. They were convicted of a range of charges that included “armed rebellion against the ruler” by, among other things, “participating in shooting at security personnel, security vehicles”, “preparing and using Molotov cocktail bombs”, “theft and armed robbery” and “inciting chaos, organizing and participating in riots”.



 ↑ Munir al-Adam © Private



 ↑ Hussein al-Rabi' © Private

Court documents show that all the defendants, including the 14 sentenced to death, were held in pre-trial detention for more than two years before their trial began and all alleged they had been tortured or otherwise ill-treated during interrogation to extract “confessions”. Some defendants asked the judges to request video footage from the prison that they said would show them being tortured. Others asked the court to summon interrogators as witnesses to describe how the “confessions” were obtained. In all cases judges ignored these requests and failed to order investigations into the allegations. The SCC appears to have largely based its decision on the “confessions”. All 14 men were executed on 23 April.

Another of the 37 men executed on 23 April was a Shi'a man who was under 18 years old at the time of the crime. Abdulkareem al-Hawaj was arrested at the age of 16 and sentenced to death on 27 July 2016 by the SCC for a range of offences related to anti-government protests. The court appears to have based its decision solely on "confessions" which he says he was forced to make while held incommunicado and tortured.

He was arrested on 16 January 2014 at a security checkpoint in al-Awamiyya. He was taken to the General Directorate of Investigations (GDI) prison in the city of al-Qatif, where he said the prison guards beat him with their hands, shoes and sticks. After a week he was moved to the GDI prison in Dammam, the capital of the Eastern Province, where he was allegedly tortured, including by being beaten and threatened with the death of his family, during interrogations by GDI officers to make him write and sign a "confession". He had no access to a lawyer during pre-trial detention and interrogation and said that he was held incommunicado in solitary confinement for the first five months of his detention. His family looked for him in the police stations and prisons of al-Qatif governorate, but officials told them he was not held in these locations.



© ↑ Abdulkareem al-Hawaj © Private

In June, following international pressure on his case, Murtaja Qureiris, a young man who was facing the death penalty, was sentenced to 12 years in prison instead of the death penalty.<sup>118</sup> He had been arrested at the age of 13. The charges against him included joining a "terrorist organization"; throwing Molotov cocktails at a police station; and firing at security forces. He was denied access to a lawyer until after his first court session in August 2018.

No executions were recorded in the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** but at least 18 death sentences were imposed by the courts for crimes that included murder, rape and armed robbery. One death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment by an appeal court.

In January, according to media reports, a Federal Supreme Court in Abu Dhabi overturned a death sentence and ordered the appeal court to re-examine the case on the ground that under Islamic law children cannot demand the death penalty for their father after their mother's death.<sup>119</sup> Earlier the children had declined *diya* ("blood money") in exchange for pardon and requested that their father be sentenced to death for the murder of their mother.

In March, a Pakistani man was convicted of premeditated murder, attempted murder and attempted theft by the court and sentenced to death.<sup>120</sup>

118 Amnesty International, *Saudi Arabia: Decision to spare teenager's life must be followed by abolition of death penalty for all juveniles* (Press release, 17 June 2019), [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/saudi-arabia-decision-to-spare-teenagers-life-must-be-followed-by-abolition-of-death-penalty-for-all-juveniles/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/saudi-arabia-decision-to-spare-teenagers-life-must-be-followed-by-abolition-of-death-penalty-for-all-juveniles/)

119 "UAE court rejects death penalty for man who murdered wife", Khaleej Times, 25 January 2019, [www.khaleejtimes.com/news/crime-and-courts/UAE-court-rejects-death-penalty-for-man-who-murdered-wife](https://www.khaleejtimes.com/news/crime-and-courts/UAE-court-rejects-death-penalty-for-man-who-murdered-wife)

120 "Man sentenced to death for killing mother and stabbing children at Fujairah home", The National, 26 March 2019, [www.thenational.ae/uae/man-sentenced-to-death-for-killing-mother-and-stabbing-children-at-fujairah-home-1.841681](https://www.thenational.ae/uae/man-sentenced-to-death-for-killing-mother-and-stabbing-children-at-fujairah-home-1.841681)

In April, a man who was reported to be suffering from a mental illness was sentenced to death for murder after the family of the victim refused *diya*.<sup>121</sup> Eight Nigerian nationals were reported to have been sentenced to death for armed robbery by a criminal court in the Emirate of Sharjah.<sup>122</sup>

**Yemen** carried out seven executions and there was a sharp increase in the imposition of death sentences; 55 death sentences were recorded compared to 13 in the previous year, 38 of which were for spying. Those sentenced to death included journalists, political opponents and activists. All the death sentences – except one – were imposed by the Huthi-run Specialized Criminal Court of Sana'a.<sup>123</sup>

On 9 July, the Huthi-run Specialized Criminal Court of Sana'a sentenced 30 academics and political figures to death on charges that included espionage for the coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Amongst those sentenced to death was Youssef al-Bawab, a 45-year-old father of five, linguistics professor and political figure.<sup>124</sup> He was arbitrarily arrested on 20 October 2016 as he was leaving his local mosque in Sana'a. Later that night, the Huthi de facto authorities raided his house, where his wife and five children live, and confiscated his belongings, including his personal computer and 150 academic documents. During the first three months, the family was unable to obtain any official information as to his whereabouts; they only found out later, through unofficial channels, that he was detained by the Political Security Office (PSO). He was interrogated for the first time in March 2017 in the presence of his lawyer, the only time he was permitted to have legal counsel prior to the trial. He was then charged on 8 April 2017, alongside 35 others, with several offences, including assisting the coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE with intelligence regarding military objectives and organizing assassinations; most of these charges carried the death penalty. Throughout his detention, proceedings against Youssef al-Bawab were seriously flawed. Irregularities included enforced disappearance, excessive pre-trial detention, undue delays in his trial, incommunicado detention, claims of torture and other ill-treatment, and lack of access to legal counsel and medical care. During one of the trial sessions on 2 April, he stated how he and others had been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment throughout their detention by the PSO in Sana'a, including beatings, being hung from the ceilings and tied up using iron chains. The court did not respond to this statement and the judge failed to order an investigation into these claims.

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121 "Death penalty to murderer after claiming mental illness", Khaleej Times, 8 April 2019, [www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/sharjah/death-penalty-to-murderer-after-claiming-mental-illness](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/sharjah/death-penalty-to-murderer-after-claiming-mental-illness)

122 "Death penalty for eight men over spate of armed robberies in Sharjah", The National, 18 April 2019, [www.thenational.ae/uae/courts/death-penalty-for-eight-men-over-spate-of-armed-robberies-in-sharjah-1.850881](http://www.thenational.ae/uae/courts/death-penalty-for-eight-men-over-spate-of-armed-robberies-in-sharjah-1.850881)

123 Huthi forces controlled large parts of Yemen

124 Amnesty International, *Yemen: Further information – 30 opposition figures sentenced to death* (Index: MDE 31/0709/2019)

# SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

## REGIONAL TRENDS

- The same four countries – Botswana, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan – that carried out executions in 2018 did so in 2019.
- Recorded executions increased by one, compared to 2018, despite a decrease in recorded executions in three out of these four countries; only South Sudan recorded an increase.
- Recorded death sentences went up by 53% due to increases in 10 countries.
- Positive signs towards abolition of the death penalty were recorded in five countries.

| COUNTRY                          | 2019 RECORDED EXECUTIONS | 2019 RECORDED DEATH SENTENCES | PEOPLE KNOWN TO BE UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH AT THE END OF 2019 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Botswana                         | 1                        | 4                             | 7                                                             |
| Burkina Faso                     | 0                        | 0                             | +                                                             |
| Cameroon                         | 0                        | 0                             | +                                                             |
| Central African Republic         | 0                        | 0                             |                                                               |
| Chad                             | 0                        | 0                             | 4+                                                            |
| Comoros                          | 0                        | 0                             |                                                               |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | 0                        | 8                             | 48+                                                           |
| Equatorial Guinea                | 0                        | 0                             |                                                               |
| Eritrea                          | 0                        | 0                             |                                                               |
| Eswatini (former Swaziland)      | 0                        | 0                             | 1                                                             |
| Ethiopia                         | 0                        | 0                             |                                                               |
| Gambia                           | 0                        | 1                             | 1                                                             |
| Ghana                            | 0                        | 8                             | 168                                                           |
| Guinea                           | 0                        | 0                             | 15+ <sup>125</sup>                                            |
| Kenya                            | 0                        | 29+                           | 1,000+                                                        |
| Lesotho                          | 0                        | 0                             | +                                                             |
| Liberia                          | 0                        | 0                             |                                                               |
| Malawi                           | 0                        | 8                             | 23                                                            |
| Mali                             | 0                        | 4+                            | +                                                             |
| Mauritania                       | 0                        | 8                             | 123                                                           |

<sup>125</sup> Although Guinea abolished the death penalty for all crimes in 2017, some prisoners remained under the sentence of death at the end of 2019. In November 2019, Amnesty International visited prisons in Guinea and documented 15 people under the sentence of death, 12 in Kindia and three in Conakry. The death sentences of these prisoners had not been commuted and more prisoners in this category could be in other prisons in the country.