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SAUDI ARABIA Execution of Nigerian men and women

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Since March 2000 Amnesty International has published a series of reports critical of the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia. Among other serious concerns, which include torture, cruel judicial punishments and the persecution of political opponents and religious minorities, Amnesty International criticized the criminal justice system under which hundreds have been executed after summary and secret trials. Defendants have frequently been denied full and prompt access to defence lawyers and been convicted solely on the basis of confessions extracted under duress.

Saudi Arabia has one of the highest rates of capital punishment in the world. Of the 766 executions recorded by Amnesty International between 1990 and 1999, over half were of migrant workers and other foreign nationals. While a high proportion of those were Asian migrant workers mainly from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Nepal -- who comprise between 60 and 80 per cent of Saudi Arabia's workforce -- at least 72 were Nigerians, mostly convicted for drug smuggling or armed robbery. By mid-June 2000 Saudi Arabia had executed 53 people, 25 of them in May: 19 were Saudi Arabian nationals and 30 were foreign nationals, including from Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Egypt and Iraq. Migrant workers and other foreign nationals have faced discriminatory treatment under the criminal justice system in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has expanded the scope of the death penalty to cover a wide range of offences, including offences without lethal consequences such as apostasy, drug dealing, sodomy and "witchcraft". The scores of people who are executed every year, many for non-violent crimes, are put to death after summary trials that offer them no opportunity to defend themselves and almost no protection against miscarriages of justice.

Execution is by public beheading for men and, according to reports, by firing squad or beheading for women, sometimes in public. Foreign nationals are sometimes not even aware that they have been sentenced to death and neither they nor their families are warned

in advance of the date of execution. They are rarely if ever allowed to see their loved ones before they are executed.

For those in prison who fear they face execution, the psychological torment is extreme. A former prisoner released from a women's prison in 1999 described to Amnesty International the fear of a fellow woman prisoner accused of murder: "Every time a guard opens her cell door she gets very scared [thinking] that they will come to take her out for execution."

Relatives of those executed in many cases receive no formal notification that the execution has taken place. The governments of foreign nationals executed in Saudi Arabia are also not always informed.

The numbers of Nigerians executed between 1991 and 1999 in the figures below have been obtained from government news media in Saudi Arabia and may in fact be higher.

Nationality	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total	Percentage of total executions
Nigerian		1	7	3	28	6	17	-	10	72	9%

On 13 May 2000 seven Nigerians were beheaded after being convicted of the armed robbery of a bank in which victims were reported to have been injured. Three other Nigerians convicted of involvement in the same armed robbery had their right hands and left feet amputated. Another Nigerian was among eight prisoners executed between 25 and 30 May 2000.

Date of execution	Place of execution	Name	Nationality	Gender	Charge
1999					
30.4.99	Mecca	Al-Hassan Mussa Shahib	Nigerian	male	drug smuggling
28.5.99	Riyadh	Hawa Faruk	Nigerian	female	drug smuggling
20.6.99	(not reported, possibly Riyadh or Mecca)	Abdullah Ibrahim Muhammad	Nigerian	male	armed robbery
2.7.99	(not reported)	Ahmad Muhammad Kassem	Nigerian	male	drug smuggling
16.7.99	Jeddah	A'ishah Sa'adah Qasim	Nigerian	female	drug smuggling
23.7.99	Mecca	Idriss Aissa Muhammad	Nigerian	male	drug smuggling
13.8.99	Jeddah	Ibrahim Muhammad Ali	Nigerian	male	drug smuggling
20.8.99	Jeddah	(name not clear)	Nigerian	male	drug trafficking
3.9.99	Jeddah	Safira Ounbiyi Salami	Nigerian	female	drug smuggling
10.9.99	Jeddah	Juma'a Bin Salah El-Din	Nigerian	male	drug smuggling
2000					
13.5.00	Jeddah	Sheik Lukman Muhammad Awl	Nigerian	male	armed robbery
13.5.00	Jeddah	Adishno Abd-al-Wasi	Nigerian	male	armed robbery
13.5.00	Jeddah	Taj-al-Din Adibayo Luwal	Nigerian	male	armed robbery
13.5.00	Jeddah	Bayu Ibrahim Bulhan	Nigerian	male	armed robbery
13.5.00	Jeddah	Niyar Mubarak Wayl	Nigerian	male	armed robbery
13.5.00	Jeddah	Abd-al-Fattah Ulsjin Amos	Nigerian	male	armed robbery
13.5.00	Jeddah	Uthman Muhammad Ibrahim	Nigerian	male	armed robbery
--.5.00	Jeddah	Al-Hajji bin Sataru bin Adimula bin Yusuf	Nigerian	male	drugs offence

Amnesty International is also concerned at the high levels of judicial amputation carried out in Saudi Arabia, which it considers to be a form of torture as defined under the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which Saudi Arabia became a state party in 1997. So far this year 23 amputations have been recorded, compared with two in the whole of 1999. Seven of these were "cross amputations" (amputation of the right hand and left foot). On 13 May 2000 cross amputations were carried out on Kindi Amoro Muhammad, Nurayn Aladi Amos and Abdullah Abu-Bakr Muhammad, Nigerian nationals convicted of armed robbery and assault with seven Nigerians executed on the same day (see above). In June two Nigerian men had their right hands amputated following conviction for theft: on 1 June Muhammad Othman Adam in Mecca, and on 4 June Sanussi Sani Muhammad.

The Nigerian government has expressed concerns about the executions of Nigerians on a number of occasions. In March 2000 President Obasanjo urged the Saudi Arabian authorities to advise Nigerian pilgrims to Mecca about the imposition of harsh judicial punishments in Saudi Arabia. Following the executions and amputations in Saudi Arabia in May 2000, Dubem Onyia, deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, was reported in the news media as saying that the Nigerian government would not "sit back and watch Nigerians being maltreated, killed or maimed in any part of the world." While again adjuring expatriate Nigerians to study and obey the laws of host countries, the Minister expressed concern that the Nigerian authorities had not been informed in advance of the executions or amputations and said that it was seeking further information about the fairness of the convictions.

Amnesty International continues to be concerned about human rights violations in Saudi Arabia, and urges the Nigerian government to use its prerogatives in inter-governmental organizations to seek improvement in the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia.

This is a 3-page document (1164 words), SAUDI ARABIA: Execution of Nigerian men and women (AI Index: MDE 23/49/00) issued by Amnesty International in June 2000. An extensive range of our materials on this and other subjects is available at <http://www.amnesty.org> and Amnesty International news releases can be received by email: <http://www.amnesty.org/news/emailnws.htm>

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