

URGENT ACTION

EXECUTED, BODY NOT RETURNED TO FAMILY

Ali Agirdas, a Turkish man convicted of drug-trafficking after an unfair trial, was executed on 20 November in Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh. His family only learned of his execution through the media, and his body has not been returned to them.

Ali Agirdas was executed on 20 November in Riyadh. His family had not been told he was about to be executed, and it seems from his last phone call to them on 19 November that neither was he. The family only learned about the execution that afternoon, when their relatives and neighbours told them it had been reported on the official Saudi Press Agency website. The family have asked repeatedly for his body to be returned to them, without success. They have not even been told where it is being kept.

Ali Agirdas had been arrested on 24 February 2007, when he was 28, and charged with trafficking drugs in Riyadh. He was convicted and sentenced to death by a General Court in Riyadh on 18 June 2008. His sentence was later upheld by a court of appeal and the Supreme Court before being ratified by the King.

Ali Agirdas had no interpreter or lawyer during his interrogation and trial. He was only assisted by a lawyer during his appeal and was convicted on the basis of a written statement in which he confessed. Ali Agirdas had told the judge interrogator that he did not know about the drugs he was accused of trafficking. However the interrogator presented him with a document in Arabic and said it would help his case. At trial, the judge told Ali Agirdas that he had signed a confession in Arabic, a language he spoke a little but could not read, which said he had known he was carrying drugs when he was arrested. Ali Agirdas told the court he had not known what was in the document.

Please write immediately in English, Arabic, Turkish or your own language:

- Calling on the Turkish and Saudi Arabian authorities to return without delay the body of Ali Agirdas to his family for burial;
- Urging the Saudi Arabian authorities to establish an official moratorium on executions immediately, with a view to abolishing the death penalty, and commute all outstanding death sentences;
- Calling on them to ensure that full information about the use of the death penalty in Saudi Arabia is publicly available and that condemned prisoners' families and lawyers are given full access to them and information about their cases, including notification of any scheduled execution;
- Reminding them that international law allows for the use of the death penalty only for the "most serious crimes" and following proceedings that fully comply with international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 JANUARY 2015 TO:

Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu
Dışişleri Bakanlığı
Dr. Sadık Ahmet Cad. No: 8
Balgat 06100
Ankara - Turkey
Secreteriat:
Fax: + 90 312 287 88 11
Parliament email:
cavusoglu@tbmm.gov.tr
Salutation: Dear Minister

Saudi Arabian Minister of the Interior
His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed
bin Naif bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud
Ministry of the Interior, P.O. Box 2933,
Airport Road, Riyadh 11134
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 403 3125 (keep trying)
Salutation: His Excellency

And copies to:
Saudi Arabian Minister of Justice
His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin
Abdulkareem Al-Issa
Ministry of Justice
University Street
Riyadh 11137
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Fax: +966 11 401 1741
+966 11 402 0311

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 302/09. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE23/033/2009/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Saudi Arabian authorities have executed at least 76 people in 2014, of whom at least 33 were put to death for drug-related offences and 29 were foreign nationals. The authorities executed Hajras al-Qurey on 22 September for drug-trafficking, despite reports that he was tortured into “confessing” to the crime and the fact that he was convicted after an unfair trial. On 18 August the authorities executed four members of one family in the south-eastern city of Najran, for “receiving large quantities of hashish”. The four men had been sentenced to death on the basis of forced “confessions” believed to have been extracted under torture. In 2013, Saudi Arabia executed at least 79 people, three of whom were under 18 at the time of the crimes for which they were put to death, in blatant violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Saudi Arabia is one of the top executioners in the world, with more than 2,000 people executed since 1985.

Court proceedings in Saudi Arabia fall far short of international standards for fair trial. Trials in capital cases are often held in secret. Defendants are rarely allowed formal representation by lawyers, and in many cases are not informed of the progress of legal proceedings against them. They may be convicted solely on the basis of “confessions” made under duress or deception. Foreign nationals with no knowledge of Arabic – the language of pre-trial interrogation and trial hearings – are often denied adequate interpretation facilities. In some cases condemned prisoners’ families are not notified in advance of their execution. The case of Ali Agirdas is only one example of how the procedures followed in imposing the death penalty cases in Saudi Arabia lead to the execution of the accused.

Saudi Arabia applies the death penalty for a wide range of offences that are not accepted as “most serious crimes” under international standards for applying the death penalty, as this is limited to crimes involving intentional killing. These include “adultery”, armed robbery, “apostasy”, drug-related offences, rape, “witchcraft” and “sorcery”. Some of these offences, such as “adultery” and “apostasy”, should not even be criminalized at all. At least one person has been executed for witchcraft and sorcery in 2014.

International standards on the use of the death penalty require all countries that still retain the death penalty to make information publicly available on its use and to return bodies of the executed prisoners to the families to give them the opportunity to bury their relatives according to their traditions and religious beliefs. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions has stated that secrecy concerning executions amounts to inhuman and degrading treatment and violates human rights. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. It violates the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Name: Ali Agirdas
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 302/09 Index: MDE 23/034/2014 Issue Date: 26 November 2014

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