

**Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions**

REFERENCE: UA  
SAU 2/2015:

13 May 2015

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 22/20 and 26/12.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the case of **Mr. Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr**. He was sentenced to death on 15 October 2014 after a trial that allegedly did not meet the most stringent due process and fair trial guarantees.

**Mr. Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr** was the subject of a joint urgent appeal SAU 12/2014 sent on 17 November 2014. The case also was previously submitted to the attention of the Government of Saudi Arabia in a communication SAU 9/2014 dated 28 August 2014. The communications express concern that he was convicted following a trial that did not meet the most stringent due process and fair trial guarantees, and that he could be imminently executed. The Government of Saudi Arabia replied in a letter dated 31 December 2014 to the joint urgent appeal SAU 12/2014.

According to the information received:

Mr. Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr has been subjected to increasing ill treatment. Additionally, it has been reported that in April 2015, the authorities performed a medical intervention to extract a bullet from his body to prepare him for the execution. It is indicated that it is a common practice in the country to remove, prior to an execution, all foreign objects from a person. Therefore, information received indicates that his execution may be imminent.

We would like to express serious concern that the death penalty may have been imposed and may be carried out against Mr. Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr after judicial

proceedings which did not comply with the most stringent due process and fair trial guarantees. In the present case, the proceedings of his trial were allegedly conducted in secret. Moreover, it is reported that the charges against him are vague and may have been imposed to punish him for his peaceful activities. In addition to this, his lawyer was not informed of some of the hearing dates and he was deprived of the opportunity of proving a full defense to the charges leveled against him.

We would also like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government that article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) guarantees the right of every individual to life, liberty and security. According to article 5 of the United Nations Safeguards Protecting the Rights of those Facing the Death Penalty, capital punishment may only be carried out pursuant to all possible safeguards to ensure a fair trial, including legal assistance at all stages of the proceedings. Only full respect for stringent due process guarantees distinguishes capital punishment from a summary execution.

We also wish to recall article 18 of the UDHR. Moreover, article 2 (1) of the 1981 Declaration of the General Assembly (A/RES/36/55) maintains the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of religion or other belief. We would like to stress the fact that Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr belongs to Shi'a Islam and not part of the majority or officially recognized religion, should not result in any impairment of the enjoyment of any right to freedom of religion or belief.

The full texts of the human rights instruments and standards recalled above are available on [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) or can be provided upon request.

In light of the foregoing and while waiting for your response, **we urgently appeal to your Excellency's Government to take all necessary measures to prevent the imminent execution of Mr. Sheikh Nimr Baqir Al-Nimr.** We appeal to your Excellency's Government to commute his death sentence.

Your Excellency's Government's response will be made available in a report to be presented to the Human Rights Council for its consideration.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Heiner Bielefeldt  
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief

Christof Heyns  
Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions