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Your Excellency,

please allow us to hereby express our deep concern about the situation of the Palestinian poet and artist Ashraf Fayadh who lives in Saudi Arabia where he was sentenced to death last month under allegations of "apostasy".

Ashraf Fayadh was first arrested on 6 August 2013 following a complaint by a Saudi Arabian citizen alleging that the poet was promoting atheism and spreading blasphemous ideas among young people. He was released the next day, but was rearrested on 1 January 2014 and charged with apostasy because of his supposed questioning of religion and spreading atheist thought through his poetry. He was also charged with violating Article 6 of the country's Anti-Cyber Crime Law by taking and storing photos of women on his phone. On 30 April 2014, the court sentenced Ashraf Fayadh to four years in prison and 800 lashes for the charges relating to images of women on his phone. It found the poet's repentance in relation to the charge of apostasy to be satisfactory. The court of appeal, however, recommended that he should nevertheless be sentenced for apostasy and sent the case back to the General Court, which in turn sentenced him to death for apostasy. Throughout this whole process, Ashraf Fayadh was reportedly denied access to a lawyer. I understand that the death sentence will now be transferred to a higher court for approval.

Being a prisoner who is solely detained for exercising his right to freedom of expression, Ashraf Fayadh must be immediately and unconditionally released. We urge the Saudi authorities to ensure that his conviction and sentence are quashed.

We are hoping that the Saudi authorities will take a decision which is in line with international human rights law.

Yours sincerely,