

URGENT ACTION

TORTURE ALLEGATIONS IGNORED, SENTENCE UPHELD

Ronaldo Lopez Ulep's 15 years' imprisonment sentence was upheld by the Court of Cassation in Qatar on 2 May. His allegations of torture have not yet been investigated.

Filipino national **Ronaldo Ulep**, a former civilian employee of Qatar's air force, had his espionage conviction upheld by the Court of Cassation in the capital, Doha, on 2 May.

Following his arrest in 2010, Qatari State Security forces held Ronaldo Ulep incommunicado for about a month before allowing him to contact his family. According to sources close to the case he was tortured during the first eight months of his detention. State Security officers forced him to sign a document in Arabic, a language he cannot read, which was later presented in court as a "confession" that was crucial in securing his conviction. In May 2014, the Court of First Instance sentenced Ronaldo Ulep to life imprisonment. He was then moved to the Central Prison in Doha and has not been allowed regular contact with his family.

According to court documents, Ronaldo Ulep told the Court of First Instance that his "confessions" had been extracted through torture and other ill-treatment, but the court rejected these allegations, citing lack of evidence to support them. The issue was brought up again by his lawyer before the Court of Appeal but it did not address the issue either or order an investigation. On 31 May 2015, Ronaldo Ulep's sentence was reduced to 15 years' imprisonment.

Please write immediately in Arabic or your own language:

- Urging the Qatari authorities to order a retrial of Ronaldo Ulep and ensure that no "evidence" obtained by torture or other ill-treatment is admitted in this or any other legal proceedings, except those brought against suspected perpetrators;
- Urging them to order an impartial, independent and effective investigation into Ronaldo Ulep's allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice in fair proceedings;
- Calling on them to ensure that Ronaldo Ulep is granted regular phone calls to his family, access to his lawyer and consular assistance, as well as facilitating the transfer of his savings to his family in the Philippines.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JUNE 2016 TO:

Minister of Justice

Dr Hassan Lahdan Saqr Al-Mohannadi
Ministry of Justice
PO Box 917
Doha, State of Qatar
Fax: +974 4483 2875
Email: info@moj.gov.qa
Salutation: Your Excellency

Attorney General

Dr Ali bin Fetais Al Marri
PO Box 705
Doha, State of Qatar
Fax: +974 4484 3211
Email: info@pp.gov.qa
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Head of state (Amir of Qatar)
Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al
Thani
PO Box 923
Doha, State of Qatar
Fax: +974 4436 1212

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR YOUSEF ALI AL-KHATER, Embassy of the State of Qatar, 1 South Audley Street W1K 1NB, 020 7493 2200, Fax 020 7493 2661, amb@qatarembassy.org.uk, amblondon@mofa.gov.qa

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 95/15. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/1809/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Six officials from the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) arrested Ronaldo Ulep at his home in Doha on 7 April 2010. According to information received by Amnesty International, during two interrogation sessions in the early months of his detention, officials burned his back and legs with cigarettes, stripped him naked and forced him to crawl around on the floor until his knees bled. They punched and slapped him.

He subsequently spent four years in solitary confinement at the State Security Bureau in Doha. A Court of First Instance in Doha convicted him on 30 April 2014 of “selling information about his employer”, and sentenced him to life imprisonment. His appeal began on 26 May 2014 and took place over six sessions; some of these lasted as little as 15 minutes and no translation service was provided.

The prison authorities have only permitted Ronaldo Ulep to phone his family once, despite his numerous requests, both verbally and in writing. Ronaldo Ulep has also been denied repeatedly to transfer savings from his bank account to his family in the Philippines. This is having an extremely damaging effect on his family who are in financial hardship and need these saving to afford paying for the children’s education.

Two other Filipino nationals were put on trial with Ronaldo Ulep, and appealed alongside him. They were arrested in March and April 2010, respectively, and Amnesty International understands that they too have been held in solitary confinement in the State Security Bureau until their trial. Both have alleged that “confessions” presented in court were extracted through torture and other ill-treatment. One of the men was sentenced to death in May 2014, the other to life imprisonment. These sentences were reduced on appeal on 31 May 2015 to life imprisonment and 15 years in prison, respectively. These verdicts were also upheld by the Court of Cassation on 2 May 2016.

Amnesty International has twice written to the Qatari authorities to raise concerns around the case – in September 2014 and in January 2015 - but has received no response. The organization has also raised such concerns with the Philippines Embassy in Doha and the Qatari National Human Rights Committee.

In recent years, Amnesty International has received a number of reports of torture or other ill-treatment being used to force detainees in Qatar to “confess” or provide information in pre-trial detention, particularly during incommunicado detention by State Security. Activist in Qatar have raised concerns that State Security personnel, generally operating in plain clothes, do not identify themselves when carrying out arrests and have been holding detainees in police detention centres rather than State Security-run facilities. Their aim appears to be to deny responsibility for carrying out particular arrests and detentions and thereby to deflect criticism of their actions.

Name: Ronaldo Ulep
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 95/15 Index: MDE 22/3977/2016 Issue Date: 9 May 2016