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June 24, 1993

His Highness Shaikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah
Emir of Kuwait

Your Highness:

I am writing to express Human Rights Watch's profound concern over the alarming increase in the imposition of the death penalty by Kuwait's State Security Court. Between June 5 and June 19, sixteen Iraqi and Palestinian men were condemned to death for collaborating with the Iraqi occupation forces. We are deeply troubled by this ominous new trend, especially since these sentences were imposed without sufficient adherence to international standards, which set strict conditions for applying the death penalty. We appeal to Your Highness to commute the death sentences and to accord all those sentenced by the State Security Court full judicial reviews in accordance with international safeguards of fair trials and basic principles of justice.

We are alarmed by the fact that Kuwait has recently carried out the first execution since 1989. On May 5, Abdel-Rahman Hasan Khafi, an Iraqi national, was executed by hanging. He had been sentenced to die by the State Security Court for collaborating with the Iraqi occupiers. In addition, Shaikh Sa'ad al-Abdalla, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, and Shaikh Sabah al-Ahmad, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, have recently stated that Kuwait intends to carry out other death sentences.

Human Rights Watch recognizes and fully [illegible] Kuwait's desire to bring [illegible] to prosecute those among them who committed serious human rights violations. However, these efforts should not be permitted to compromise defendants' rights, especially the strict standards for the application of the death penalty in countries such as Kuwait where that punishment is still lawful.

We commend the Kuwaiti government for its frequently stated willingness to conduct the trials of suspected collaborators in accordance with basic standards of justice. Such statements are an important indication that the government does not intend to rebuild the nation on a foundation of disrespect for essential rights. However, it is regrettable that in practice some of those convicted by the State Security Court have not received fair trials. Especially troubling is that those sentenced to death for collaboration have not been accorded the special

Aryeh Neier, Executive Director / Kenneth Roth, Deputy Director / Gara LaMarche, Associate Director / Holly J. Burkhalter, Washington Director

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