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Filipino on Saudi Arabia's death row might avoid beheading

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NCR Today

MANILA, Philippines -- A Filipino overseas worker imprisoned in Saudi Arabia might no longer be beheaded after a Philippines-born philanthropist in the United States led the initiative to raise "blood money" for heirs of a man he is accused of killing in self-defense in 2000.

Rodelio "Dondon" Lanuza, held in Dammam Jail in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia, posted a statement online thanking US-based philanthropist and lawyer Loida Nicolas Lewis for helping to raise money through a campaign on Facebook and through other means.

Saudi Arabia's highest court sentenced Lanuza to death by beheading in 2001. He was jailed in 2000, accused of killing a Saudi man he said tried to sexually abuse him, said John Leonard Monterona, Migrant-Middle East regional coordinator, in a statement posted Thursday on the same blog.

In Islamic law, the family of a victim can waive punishment by accepting blood money, Monterona said.

The father and brothers of the man killed met with Philippines Ambassador Ezzedin Tago in February 2011 to say they were willing to forgive Lanuza and accept about 3 million Saudi Arabian Riyal (about \$800,000) in compensation, reported a statement Friday from the Philippines Embassy in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.

Lanuza's recent message called Lewis the "final catalyst" for action on his case and said the "God fearing woman" offers a "model of sincerity" and "epitome of a Filipina (working) for a just cause." He said the money and acceptance of payment by his victim's family bring his ordeal to an end.

However, the victim's relatives say they have not received the blood money, nor have they submitted the required waiver to the court, the embassy said, so it is premature to say Lanuza's life has been spared.

Lanuza has two children who have been raised by relatives in the Philippines. His wife works in Saudi Arabia as a nurse.

His family's plight was highlighted in February as the Philippines church commemorated National Migrants' Sunday.

Migrante Middle-East also monitors the cases of 16 other overseas workers on death row in the Middle East. Eight of them are in Saudi Arabia, Monterosa reported in August.

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