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ST LUCIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EXPRESSES ITS REGRET AT THE FIRST EXECUTION IN NINE YEARS

In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister of St Lucia, John G M Compton, Amnesty International expressed its deep regret at the execution of Joseph Solomon on 17 October 1995 -- the first execution to take place in that country for more than nine years.

"We believe that the resumption of hangings in St Lucia is a retrograde step which is contrary both to international standards and to the worldwide trend towards abolition of the death penalty", the organization said.

Amnesty International is further concerned by reports that the execution of Joseph Solomon was scheduled with less than 24 hours notice, allowing little time for his lawyers to pursue any appeals.

Amnesty International maintains that there is no evidence that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than other punishments. It does not serve the interest of societies which impose it, but brutalizes all who are involved in the process.

In its letter, the human rights organization urges the government of Saint Lucia:

- not to carry out any further executions;
- to commute the death sentences of those remaining on death row; and
- to take steps towards the abolition of this cruel and unnecessary punishment.

The organization asked the government of Saint Lucia what avenues of appeal had been pursued by Joseph Solomon before his execution date was set and whether he had an opportunity to petition the appropriate authorities for clemency -- as set out by the Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

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