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PUBLIC STATEMENT

BANGLADESH

DEATH SENTENCES NO ANSWER TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Amnesty International is disturbed by reports that 15 people were recently sentenced to death in Bangladesh on charges of involvement in the killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family in August 1975.

Although the process of judicial appeal to the High Court has just begun and those sentenced have the right to appeal to the Supreme Court and to petition the Head of State for clemency thereafter, Amnesty International is calling on the government of Bangladesh to commute these and other death sentences at the earliest opportunity.

The organization welcomes investigations into past human rights abuses but insists that, once the truth is revealed, decisive measures must be taken to ensure that punishment for such abuses does not itself constitute a violation of human rights.

Amnesty International is opposed to the death penalty at all times and in all cases. It appeals to the government of Bangladesh to abolish this punishment once and for all, and calls on the opposition parties to support any move towards this goal. This will be in keeping with a worldwide trend towards the abolition – in law and practice -- of the death penalty.

The organization also urges the Government of Bangladesh to ensure that the drive to investigate past human rights violations does not target only selected groups, but that all perpetrators of human rights violations are brought to justice without exception, no matter who they are or where and when the violations occurred.

At the same time, it calls on the authorities to ensure that trials conform at all times to internationally established fair trial standards, and that the treatment of the accused in detention and the sentences imposed on them by courts do not themselves constitute violations of human rights.

Amnesty International believes that a continued determination to bring to justice perpetrators of human rights violations will not only enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in the country but also eliminate the need to deal with these at a later date.

ENDS.../