

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Penalty

20 February 1995

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Charles Ombusu, aged 60

Charles Ombusu has become the first person to be sentenced to death in Papua New Guinea (PNG) since the reintroduction of the death penalty in 1991.

Charles Ombusu was sentenced by the PNG National Court in Popondetta, northwest of PNG's capital, Port Moresby on 20 February. He was found guilty of wilful murder and rape and has been sentenced to hang. He has the right of appeal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is the first death sentence since reintroduction of the death penalty into PNG's Criminal Code in 1991 in response to an escalation in violent crime. Since 1991 there have been a growing number of calls for its use from politicians although some members of the judiciary remain opposed to its use.

In 1993, the Public Prosecutor introduced guidelines for use of the death penalty in cases of wilful murder. In 1994, on handing down the verdict of two men found guilty of wilful murder, the judge requested that the defence argue why the defendants should not be sentenced to death. In this case the defence was successful.

Amnesty International is opposed to the death penalty under any circumstances. The organization considers the death penalty to be the ultimate form of cruel punishment and a violation of the most basic of human rights - the right to life. Many governments argue that the death penalty deters violent criminals, but evidence indicates that this is not the case. Crime rates in countries where the death penalty is in force do not fall and those who are executed are all too frequently the poor or members of disadvantaged minorities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please telephone or send telegrams/faxes and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- expressing concern that Charles Ombusu has been sentenced to death and urging the authorities to commute the sentence;
- urging the PNG Government to abolish the death penalty and expressing opposition to the death penalty as the ultimate form of cruel punishment and a violation of the most basic of human rights - the right to life.

APPEALS TO

Prime Minister, and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade
The Rt. Hon. Sir Julius Chan GCMG, KBE, MP
Office of the Prime Minister
PO Box 6605
Boroko, NCD
Papua New Guinea

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Papua New Guinea

Telephone: + 675 276 715

Faxes: + 675 276 540 / 276 629

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Minister for Justice
Hon. Arnold Marsipal, MP

Ministry of Justice
Central Government Offices
Kumul Avenue, Waigani
Papua New Guinea

Telegrams: Justice Minister, Waigani, Papua New Guinea

Telephone: + 675 271 502

Faxes: + 675 259 265 / 252 512

Salutation: Dear Minister Marsipal

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court
Arnold Amet
PO Box 7018
Boroko, NCD
Papua New Guinea
Faxes: +675 257 732

and to diplomatic representatives of Papua New Guinea accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 April 1995.