

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 35/02/98

24 February 1998

Further information on UA 163/96 (ASA 35/05/96, 1 July 1996) and follow-up (ASA 35/07/96, 6 September 1996) - Fear of imminent resumption of executions

PHILIPPINES Leo Echegaray, house painter, aged about 36

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Amnesty International fears that Leo Echegaray may be executed imminently. He is scheduled to be executed by lethal injection between 27 February and 28 August 1998. Fears that his execution may take place within the next few days have been heightened by reports in the press that President Ramos is opposed to granting clemency. The Philippine media have also begun to publish reports of his impending execution. If this execution goes ahead it will be the first in the Philippines in more than 20 years. The last execution took place in 1976.

Leo Echegaray was convicted of raping his step-daughter in 1994 and sentenced to death. In June 1996 and again in February 1997 the Supreme Court rejected appeals against the sentence lodged by human rights lawyers on his behalf. According to the rules which govern the implementation of the death penalty law, Leo Echegaray, his lawyers and relatives will only be informed of his impending execution after sunrise on the day itself and he may be executed eight hours later.

The Philippines abolished the death penalty in 1987 but reintroduced it in late 1993 for a wide range of "heinous" crimes, including rape, murder, drug-trafficking, robbery with violence, arson and bribery. Since 1994 well over 400 prisoners have been sentenced to death. Amnesty International fears that if this execution goes ahead, it may pave the way for an accelerating rate of executions in the future. Five other prisoners, in addition to Leo Echegaray, have had their death sentences confirmed by the Supreme Court and are at risk of execution in 1998. They include Pablito Andan who was sentenced to death for rape and murder and is scheduled to be executed between 28 March and 28 September 1998.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or in your own language:**

- urging the President to exercise his power to commute the death sentence passed on Leo Echegaray;
- expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty as a violation of one of the most fundamental human rights - the right to life;
- acknowledging the need to combat serious crime in the Philippines, but emphasizing that studies around the world have failed to find convincing evidence that the death penalty deters criminals more effectively than other punishments;
- pointing out that the majority of prisoners on death row in the Philippines come from the poorer, most disadvantaged sectors of society who cannot afford the best possible lawyer for their defence;
- urging the authorities to commute all other death sentences and appealing for a more humane form of punishment for those convicted of serious offences.

**APPEALS TO:**

President Fidel V. Ramos  
Malacañang Palace  
Manila  
Philippines

**Faxes: +63 2 832 3793 (via Dept of Foreign Affairs)**  
**Telegrams: President Ramos, Manila, Philippines**  
**Salutation: Dear President**

**COPIES TO:**

Bishop Hilario M. Gomez (Head of the Protestant Church, of which President Ramos is a member)  
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United Church of Christ in the Philippines  
877 EDSA, West Triangle, Quezon City  
Philippines  
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Philippines

and to diplomatic representatives of the Philippines accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 April 1998.