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MEDIA ADVISORY

Amnesty International Representatives join campaign against death penalty in the Philippines

As concerns grow that the first execution in the Philippines in more 20 years may be imminent, two representatives of Amnesty International will join six delegates of the USA-based organization "Journey of Hope ... From Violence to Healing" and local groups in a week-long campaign against the death penalty.

Beginning on Monday 9 March in Manila, the group will join Filipino human rights activists from the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) and the Coalition against the Death Penalty (CADP) in a campaign to highlight the compelling arguments against the death penalty, and to appeal to the Philippine authorities not to resume executions.

The six members of "Journey of Hope ... From Violence to Healing" all have personal experience of the effects of the death penalty in the USA. Three of the six are close relatives of murder victims and two are themselves survivors of violent attacks. All are committed in their opposition to the death penalty and, as victims of crime, will speak of their personal experience in working through their pain and anger towards reconciliation. Their presentations in the USA have caused many people to reexamine their opinion about the death penalty.

The delegation will speak at universities and colleges, participate in radio and television programmes, and meet representatives of the Church and families for the more than 500 prisoners on death row in the Philippines.

Leo Echegaray, convicted of raping his step-daughter, is currently at imminent risk of execution by lethal injection, unless President Ramos grants him clemency. If this first execution goes ahead, Amnesty International fears that it may pave the way for an accelerating rate of executions in the future.

Amnesty International is also concerned about reports that some of those now on death row in the Philippines were subjected to torture or ill-treatment to extract confessions.

A press conference will be held on Monday, 9 March at 11.00am, at Bulwagang Plaridel, National Press Club, Intramuros, Manila.

For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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