

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 34/002/2004 (Public)
News Service No: 091
16 April 2004

Papua New Guinea: Return to executions in Papua New Guinea would be a retrograde step

Papua New Guinea appears to be reversing its support for international abolition of the death penalty, leaving it increasingly isolated as the last independent South Pacific state contemplating executions.

Following the reintroduction of the death penalty in Papua New Guinea in 1991, the country is now studying procedures for executions within Singapore with a view to adopting them. In imposing death sentences and now preparing procedures for executions, Papua New Guinea is clearly running counter to both regional and worldwide trends to abolish the death penalty.

"The death penalty is a cruel and arbitrary punishment, which carries the very real risk of executing the innocent. Rather than attempting to extend its use, Papua New Guinea should declare a moratorium on all executions as a first step"

"Papua New Guinea stands alone in the Pacific in planning to enforce the death penalty. All other states of the Pacific Islands Forum either no longer have laws providing for the death penalty or have stopped enforcing them, often decades ago."

"The application of the death penalty in Singapore is far from being a shining example worthy of emulation. Application of the death penalty in that country is shrouded in secrecy and execution rates are among the highest in the world. Papua New Guinea should focus instead on working with international donors towards a more effective system of fighting crime."

Papua New Guinea's current moves to prepare execution procedures appear to be a reaction to public anger over violent crime and ignores strong evidence that the death penalty does not have a unique deterrent effect. Criminologists have long argued that the best way to deter crime is to increase the certainty of detection, arrest and conviction.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>