

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 17/054/2002 (Public)
News Service No: 199
6 November 2002

Embargo Date: 6 November 2002 00:01 GMT

China: Execution is not a solution. Amnesty International condemns 46 executions in two days.

"The executions of 29 people in Chongqing municipality and on Hainan island last Wednesday and additional 17 - in the town of Pingdingshan in Henan province on Friday, shows an appalling lack of respect for human rights," Amnesty International said today.

The executions follow recent calls by the authorities for the intensification of the "strike-hard" anti-crime campaign, and come ahead of the 16th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, which begins this Friday.

Amnesty International appeals to the Chinese government to immediately stop executions and review the extensive use of the death penalty in China.

"China continues to go against the world wide trend towards abolition of the death penalty and is way out of line with the rest of the world in its use of the death penalty," Amnesty International said.

"The death penalty is a violation of the most basic human right - the right to life. It is an irrevocable act of violence by the state and the risk of executing the innocent can never be eliminated," Amnesty International said.

In China, campaigns against crime, such as the "strike-hard" campaign, usually lead to an increase in the use of torture and the use of speeded up procedures for trial which result in many miscarriages of justice

Amnesty International reiterates its call for the Chinese government to end its spiralling use of the death penalty and to replace this callous and counterproductive policy with more effective and humane criminal punishments, in line with global trends.

Background

Since the "Strike Hand" anti-crime campaign was launched in April 2001, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of people executed. Amnesty International reported at least 4,015 death sentences and 2,468 executions in China during 2001, with a peak of 2,960 death sentences and 1,781 executions between April and June 2001. The organization believes that the actual figure is much

higher, because the Chinese authorities do not reveal the total number of executions carried out, considering such statistics a state secret.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Amnesty International also has concerns about the way in which the death penalty is applied in China, the speed and fairness of trials and the wide range of offences punishable by the death penalty. The death penalty is irrevocable and can be inflicted on the innocent. It has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments and brutalises those involved in the process of executions and the wider society as a whole.

More than half of the world's countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. International bodies, including the European Union and the United Nations, have made calls endorsing and promoting the global trend toward a reduction in use and abolition of the death penalty.

Amnesty International recently sent a Memorandum to the Chinese government making detailed recommendations for the authorities to push ahead with reforms to establish genuine rule of law and respect for human rights (for more details see AI Index: ASA17/52/2002). Despite government assurances that the death penalty is applied sparingly, its use and abuse in China continues to escalate.

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in Hong Kong on +852 2385 7298 or in London on +44 207 413 5729

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>