

EXTRA 69/02

Fea.

KINGDOM OF THAILAND at least 30 people on death row

After the execution of 44-year-old Somkliang Soyplai on 3 September, Amnesty International fears that at least 30 others whose death sentences have been confirmed in Thailand are now in imminent danger of execution.

Somkliang Soyplai was sentenced to death for the rape and murder of his 10-year-old daughter. According to press reports, he initially confessed to the charges but withdrew his statement in court.

In January the Director General of the Corrections Department, Siwa Sangmanee, stated that between 20 and 30 people would be executed this year.

According to available information, the Thai prison service now has more people on death row than at any point in its history. More than 400 people under sentence of death, over 180 of whom were convicted of drug offences, are awaiting the outcome of their appeals.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Thai authorities resumed executions in 1995, after an eight-year moratorium. In the last six years, 39 prisoners have been executed. At least fourteen have been executed under the current administration, which came to power in January 2001. Five of these were executed at two hours' notice, with no opportunity to contact their relatives. The preparations for their executions were televised, reportedly on the orders of the Prime Minister. Large numbers of people convicted of drug crimes were sentenced to death in 2001; at one point more than 33 convicted traffickers were sentenced to death in a single week.

There are credible reports of police ill-treating and torturing suspects in pre-trial detention to extract confessions. Confessions are regularly used as evidence in capital trials, and defendants have maintained in court that police forced them to confess.

Executions in Thailand are carried out using a machine-gun. Prisoners stand with their hands tied to a pole, and are shot from behind a curtain. Preparations are underway to introduce lethal injection to replace shooting by 2003.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern that at least 30 people sentenced to death face imminent execution, and that others in the final appeals stage may also be at risk;
- expressing your sympathy for the victims of rape and murder and recognizing the need to take measures against serious crime, but pointing out that the death penalty has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect and is a violation of the right to life;
- expressing grave concern at the execution on 2 September of Somkliang Soyplai;
- urging the authorities not to carry out these executions and to establish an immediate moratorium on executions, with a view to abolition, in line with recommendations by the United Nations Commission for Human Rights.

APPEALS TO:

(Please note that fax machines may be switched off outside office hours - seven hours ahead of GMT)

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra
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Government House
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Bangkok 10300
Thailand

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Bangkok, Thailand
Faxes: + 66 2 280 1443 / 282 2792
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Purachai Piemsomboon
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
Thanon Atsadang
Bangkok 10200
Thailand

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Bangkok, Thailand
Faxes: + 66 2 223 8851
Salutation: Dear Minister

Siva Sangmanee
Director General
Corrections Department
Nonthaburee Road 1
Nonthaburee
Bangkok 11000
Thailand

Faxes: + 66 2 967 3335
Salutation: Dear Director General

COPIES TO:

Chaturon Chaisaeng
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Thanon Ratchadaphisek
Chatuchak
Bangkok 10900
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Faxes: + 66 2 541 2314 / 513 2982

Saneh Chamarik
Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission
422 Phayathai Road
Srapathum Royal Palace
Pathumvan District road
Bangkok 10330
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Faxes: + 66 2 219 2964

and to diplomatic representatives of Thailand accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.

