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## **Indonesia: First execution in five years -- a step back**

*The recent execution of two men -- the first in five years in Indonesia -- is a retrograde step and a flagrant violation of the right to life, Amnesty International said today.*

*The two men, Gerson Pandie and Fredik Soru, both 34 years old, were sentenced to death in 1989 for the murder of Theopilus and Marselina Pingak, and their two adopted children, Memori and Asti. They were executed on Saturday 19 May by firing squad.*

*Their appeal for Presidential clemency was rejected in June 1994, but Amnesty International is concerned that they may have not had a fair trial. The men claimed that their clemency application was prepared by prison officials and that they were made to sign it under the pretence they were signing to have their handcuffs removed.*

*A third man convicted of the same crime, Dance Soru, died in prison. According to newspaper reports he died from electrocution during an incident at Penfui prison in Kupang, West Timor. The exact circumstances are not known and it is not known whether there was an investigation into his death.*

*"The resumption of executions clearly goes against the worldwide trend towards the abolition of this inherently unjust and arbitrary punishment," Amnesty International added, reiterating its concern at the Indonesian vote against a resolution calling for an international moratorium on the death penalty at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in April this year.*

### **Background**

*Executions in Indonesia are rare, with the last known ones taking place in 1995. However, Amnesty International recently raised concerns that the death*

*penalty has been included in legislation on Human Rights Courts for gross violations, which was adopted in November 2000.*

*Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, however heinous the crime for which it is imposed, as a violation of the right to life. There is no evidence that the death penalty helps deter crimes more effectively than other punishments. Moreover, studies have shown it is more likely to be imposed on those who are poorer and less educated. The risk of error in applying the death penalty is inescapable, yet it is irrevocable.*

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