

THAILAND Supoj Pengklai

Supoj Pengklai was shot dead by a firing squad on 29 October 1998, in Bangkwang Prison, north of Bangkok. The execution, the fourth in less than three years, has raised serious fears for others on death row in Thailand.

Supoj Pengklai was a former master-sergeant attached to Pa Payom sub-district police station in Phattalung Province, southern Thailand. He was sentenced to death two years ago for killing two people and injuring several of his colleagues who attempted to arrest him. According to reports, he threw a grenade at fellow police officers.

As with all executions in Thailand, Supoj Pengklai was killed in secret and without prior warning. Amnesty International fears that any of the 158 prisoners on death row in Thailand could be similarly executed at any time.

In reference to Supoj Pengklai's killing, the Corrections Department spokesperson said: "When a policeman does wrong, he deserves the severest penalty." The last execution in Thailand took place in November 1997 when two men were executed after having been convicted of rape and murder. In January 1996 an execution took place for the first time in nine years, setting an ominous precedent.

Article 31 of the new Constitution, adopted in October 1997, allows for the death penalty. The death penalty in Thailand is mandatory for premeditated murder; the murder of an official on government business; production or trafficking of heroin, and regicide. It is optional for rape, robbery, kidnapping, arson, and bombing if death results, insurrection, treason, airline hijacking and espionage, and possession of more than 100 grams of heroin or amphetamines.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing deep regret that the Thai authorities executed Supoj Pengklai;
- seeking assurance that the 158 other prisoners on death row in Thailand will not be executed;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of violent crime, but voicing opposition to the death penalty as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment;
- stressing that the death penalty has never been shown to be an effective deterrent to such crimes and is brutalizing to all involved in its application;
- calling on the Royal Thai Government to abolish the death penalty by amending the new Constitution;
- reminding the government of Thailand of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 6: "Every human being has the inherent right to life."

APPEALS TO:

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