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## **PHILIPPINES: CALL TO HALT MOVE TOWARD EXECUTIONS**

The Philippine Coalition against the Death Penalty (CADP), Amnesty International and the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG), today renewed their campaign to stop the Philippine Government carrying out executions under its restored death penalty laws.

“We are dismayed that an average of 12 people are being sentenced to death each month in the Philippines -- one of the highest rates in the world. We fear that the first executions could take place as early as June, and there are now at least 300 prisoners waiting on death row,” said Amnesty International’s Asia Director Rory Mungoven.

During today’s meeting with local abolitionist groups in Manila Amnesty International drew attention to its recently published report *Against the tide: the death penalty in Southeast Asia* which highlights patterns of judicial executions within the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The report examines how Southeast Asia has emerged as a notable exception to a worldwide trend towards the abolition of the death penalty and notes how a number of ASEAN governments obscure the use of the death penalty by failing to release full information regarding the rate of executions and prisoners on death row. The report’s seven country studies illustrate how people have been sentenced to death after unfair trials, how some of those executed may have been innocent of crimes for which they were convicted and how many of those executed were poorer, less educated and more vulnerable than the average population.

“The Philippine Government’s decision to restore the death penalty may sit well with its ASEAN neighbours, but it runs counter to the worldwide trend towards abolition,” Amnesty International said.

“The Philippines is in many ways a positive model for human rights protection in the region. It is a matter of deep regret that it should allow this reputation to be marred by failing to show leadership against capital punishment and in defence of one of the most basic of human rights -- that of life.”

While acknowledging deep popular concern in the Philippines and elsewhere at rising crime rates, the meeting reiterated that there was no evidence that executions have any greater deterrent effect against crime than other forms of punishment.

“The suggestion that the executions will help solve the crime problem in the Philippines is a sham. Justice and the suffering of crime victims should not lead to the imposition of the death penalty but rather to effective means of crime deterrence -- namely thorough investigation and detection, speedy and impartial prosecution and the sure prospect of long periods of imprisonment.”

At the meeting the abolitionist groups also reiterated their fundamental opposition to the death penalty on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life, and the right not be subjected

to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

“As ASEAN government leaders met in Singapore this week we again say ‘No to the Death Penalty’ -- whether here in the Philippines or elsewhere in the region. The case of Flor Contemplacion, a Filipino migrant worker executed in Singapore, should serve as a reminder that the death penalty continues to work unfairly against the most vulnerable,” Amnesty International said.

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