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Taiwan confirms another death sentence ignoring the global trend

On 28 July by the Taiwanese Supreme Court confirmed a death sentence despite use of torture to extract confessions from Chiou Ho-shun.

Chiou and his 11 co-defendants were tried in connection with two separate crimes that both took place in 1987 including the kidnapping of a young boy Lu Cheng. Chiou was sentenced to death in 1989 and his co-defendants received prison terms.

Appeals have been going back and forth between the High Court and the Supreme Court 11 times in connection with uncertainties and irregularities in connection with the convictions.

In 1994 police officers and two public prosecutors were convicted of extracting confessions through torture. In 2003 police also admitted that they had covered up that a man executed for other offences had confessed to Lu Cheng's murder.

There are serious concerns that the trial was unfair: the defendants were held incommunicado for four months in a police station, denied access to legal counsel, initial confessions were extracted through torture and these confessions had been accepted by the trial courts in their convictions of the defendants

The Code of Criminal Procedure in Taiwan prohibits the use in court of confessions extracted through torture.

Despite Taiwan's intention to abolish the death penalty, in April 2010 four prisoners were unexpectedly executed ending an unofficial moratorium that had been in place since 2005. Five more executions took place in March 2011.

The coordinator of ADPAN Louise Vischer, says, "Taiwan is ignoring basic human rights standards and places itself on a course which goes against the global trend to abolish the death penalty".

The Anti Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) is a cross-regional network made up of NGOs, defense lawyers and activists from 23 countries which campaigns for an end to the death penalty across Asia and the Pacific.

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