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Bangladesh must overturn all death sentences

The death sentence imposed against a Bangladeshi MP convicted of crimes against humanity is not the way to bring justice to the many victims of the country's war of independence, Amnesty International said today.

"The many victims of horrific abuses during Bangladesh's independence war and their families have long deserved justice but the death penalty is not the answer. One human rights abuse cannot make amends for another," said Abbas Faiz, Bangladesh Researcher at Amnesty International.

"Bangladesh must overturn the death sentence against Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and all others. The death penalty is the ultimate cruel and inhuman punishment and can never be a way to deliver justice."

Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, six-time Member of Parliament from the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, was found guilty of crimes including genocide and torture committed during Bangladesh's war of independence with Pakistan in 1971.

His family has said that he will appeal the sentence.

"We urge the Bangladeshi government to ensure that Chowdhury's appeal complies with international law and standards relating to fair trials, and without recourse to the death penalty," said Abbas Faiz.

"The Bangladeshi authorities must also impose a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolishing the death penalty."

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution.

Background Information

The current government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina set up the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in 2010 under national law to look at crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide committed during Bangladesh's war of independence.

Of the seven people the ICT has sentenced to date, five have been sentenced to death and are able to appeal to the country's Supreme Court. This includes Chowdhury and four members of the opposition Jamaat-e-Islami party. The two others were sentenced to imprisonment. One of these, Abdul Quader Mollah, has since had his sentence increased to death by the Supreme Court, following an appeal by the government. He cannot appeal this death sentence because there is no higher court to hear it.