

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Indonesia: Execution of Indian national is step backwards**

The execution of Ayodhya Prasad Chaubey marks a step backwards for human rights in Indonesia. The 65-year-old Indian national was sentenced to death for drug-trafficking in 1994. His execution today is the first in the country in over three years.

"The execution is a violation of the right to life and a serious blow to the respect for human rights in Indonesia," said Catherine Baber, Asia Pacific Deputy Director at Amnesty International. "By carrying out this execution, Indonesia is moving sharply against the global trend towards abolishing this inherently cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment."

Amnesty International is concerned that Ayodhya Prasad Chaubey's trial might not have met international fair trial standards. He reportedly did not have access to lawyers or interpreters during the initial police investigation and so was denied an opportunity to prepare a defence or to fully understand the charges against him.

The possibility of error in any justice system means that every execution carries the risk of killing the innocent.

"We are particularly concerned about the risk that the death penalty may be applied in error -- especially in a judicial system which is still in need of reform," said Catherine Baber. "This risk is highlighted by the allegations of shortcomings in Ayodhya Prasad Chaubey's trial, and by concerns about corruption within the judiciary expressed by the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers following his visit to Indonesia in 2002."

Two Thai nationals convicted of the same crime also face the death penalty after their appeals for presidential clemency were rejected in July 2004. Saelow Prasert, a 62-year old man, and Namsong Sirilak, a 32-year-old woman, are among 11 drug-traffickers whose appeals were rejected in June and July.

While Amnesty International recognizes that governments need to address the trade and use of illicit drugs, the organization is convinced that the death penalty will not provide the solution. There is no convincing evidence that the death penalty acts as a more effective deterrent against crime than any other form of punishment.

The organization is urging the Indonesian authorities to declare a moratorium on executions, with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

## **Background**

At least sixty-seven people are believed to be on death row in Indonesia. Despite pro-death penalty statements by the government, particularly for drug trafficking, executions are rare. The last known execution took place in May 2001 when two men were executed for murder. Prior to this, there had been no executions for six years.

In recent years, an increasing number of death sentences have been handed down to those convicted of drug trafficking. Of the eight death sentences handed down by courts of first instance this year, seven have been for drug-related offences committed by foreign nationals. In June and July 2004, President Megawati Sukarnoputri rejected clemency for eleven people convicted of drug-related offences.

## Public Document

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