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Trinidad and Tobago: Government must stop execution of Darren Roger Thomas

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago must stop the execution of Darren Roger Thomas who is scheduled to be hanged next Tuesday, Amnesty International urged today.

“Only last week Attorney General Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj stated that carrying out the death penalty in Trinidad and Tobago did not raise human rights concerns. This is regrettably not true,” said Amnesty International’s Secretary General, Pierre Sané, following a discussion with the Attorney General.

Indeed, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago clearly violated the human rights of Glen Ashby when it hanged him on 14 July 1994. This was while his constitutional motion and his petition to the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee were pending and despite a request for a stay of execution issued by the UN body.

“If the Government proceeds with the hanging of Darren Roger Thomas on Tuesday-- in order to fulfill the promise of the Attorney General to carry out an execution by the end of June -- then it will be irrevocably violating his rights both under national and international law,” Amnesty International stated.

National law requires all appeals of death sentences to be completed within 2 years. However, according to the Status Report on the Implementation of the Death Penalty issued by the Attorney General, this 2-year time period was exceeded in Darren Roger Thomas’ case. Furthermore Darren Roger Thomas has a petition pending before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The government has not even given the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights its time limit of nine months to complete their examination of his case. To execute him while this petition is pending also violates Article 5 (6) of the American Convention on Human Rights which prohibits the carrying out of a death sentence while recourse procedures are pending.

“We express our sympathy to the family of Chandranath Maharaj, whose death Darren Roger Thomas was convicted of participating in on 6 February 1993, as well as to the families of all people who have been murdered in Trinidad and Tobago,” Amnesty International said. “However, killing a person to show that murdering a person is wrong offers no solution to the problems of violent crime.”

Amnesty International urges the Government not to blatantly violate its own and international law and to stop the execution of Darren Roger Thomas.

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