

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 42/98

Death penalty / possible imminent execution 18 June 1998

PAKISTANRoop Lal

Reports received by a local human rights organization from jail authorities indicate that Roop Lal, who has been in a death cell and in solitary confinement for the last 25 years at Sahiwal Central Jail, is likely to be executed shortly.

Further information concerning this case, including the charges brought against Roop Lal, have been difficult to obtain but will be communicated to the Urgent Action network when they become available.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Roop Lal, an Indian national, was sentenced to death by a court martial some 25 years ago and has reportedly been held in solitary confinement since his conviction. His appeals for commutation of the sentence to the army authorities and his mercy petition to the President of Pakistan have both been turned down.

His long isolation has reportedly caused severe physical and mental impairment to the extent that he is now paralysed and has failing speech and vision.

Pakistan has one of the largest death cell populations in the world -- the non-governmental Human Rights Commission of Pakistan stated that in mid-1997, 2,855 people were under sentence of death in Pakistan. This number grows by about 150 to 200 each year. In 1997, 13 people were executed, including a young man who was only 14 years old at the time of the alleged offence. The latest execution to come to Amnesty International's notice was that of Balbir Singh, an Indian prisoner executed on 9 June 1998, also in Sahiwal Central Jail.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- urging the government authorities to commute the death sentence of Roop Lal;
- calling upon them to ensure that Roop Lal will not continue to be held in solitary confinement as prolonged isolation amounts to cruel and inhuman treatment and that he be given access to adequate medical treatment;
- urging that the death penalty be abolished as it violates the right to life and the prohibition of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

APPEALS TO:

President Rafiq Tarar
Office of the President
Islamabad, Pakistan

Telegrams: President, Islamabad, Pakistan
Faxes: + 00 92 51 9203938 / 82001349
Salutation: Dear President

General Jehangir Karamat
Chief of Army Staff
General Headquarters
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Telegrams: General Karamat, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
Faxes: + 00 92 51 562271
Salutation: Dear General

Chaudhary Shujat Hussain
Minister of the Interior
Ministry of the Interior
Pak Secretariat
Islamabad
pakistan

Telegrams: Minister Interior,
Faxes: + 92 51 9202624
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Pakistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.