

URGENT ACTION

DEATH PENALTY PROPOSALS PUT LIVES AT RISK

At least ten people under sentence of death will be at risk of execution if legal amendments to facilitate the resumption of executions are passed in Papua New Guinea. The Government has announced that Parliament will imminently debate these draft legal changes. Executions have not taken place in the country since 1954.

The Attorney General has announced that he will be tabling a Bill this week to facilitate implementing the death penalty. Another Bill to expand the scope of the death penalty to crimes including sorcery-related murder and rape is also expected to be discussed. Moves to implement and expand the use of the death penalty were announced by the government as part of a series of measures aimed at addressing the situation of law and order in the country, following highly publicised and brutal sorcery-related killings and rapes of women. The law currently allows for death penalty by hanging for crimes including treason, piracy with use of force and wilful (premeditated) murder.

The death penalty violates the right to life as recognized in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. A resumption of executions and expansion of scope of the death penalty in Papua New Guinea would be an extremely retrograde step, and would set the country against the global trend towards abolition. It also runs counter to recommendations, including in recent United Nations General Assembly resolutions on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, to reduce the number of offences for which the death penalty may be applied.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Asking the Prime Minister, Attorney General and head of the opposition to instruct Members of the Parliament to reject any move to enable the carrying out of executions and the expansion of the number of offences for which the death penalty may be applied in Papua New Guinea;
- Stating that there is no convincing evidence that the death penalty deters crime, asking the authorities to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty, in line with recent UN General Assembly resolutions, and to commute all death sentences to terms of imprisonment; and
- Welcoming legislative changes aimed at addressing violence against women and sorcery-related violence in the country, but urging that any measures introduced are compatible with international human rights standards and do not include recourse to the death penalty.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 JULY 2013 TO:

Prime Minister

Peter O'Neill
Office of the Prime Minister
National Parliament
PO Box 639
Waigani, Papua New Guinea
Fax: + (675) 323 3903
Email: pmsoffice@pmnec.gov.pg

Salutation: Prime Minister

Attorney General and Minister of Justice

Kereng'a Ku'a, Office of the Minister,
PO Box 591, Waigani, NCD
Papua New Guinea
Fax: + (675) 325 9712
Email: attorneygeneral@justice.gov.pg

Salutation: Attorney General

Head of the Opposition

Belden Namah
PNG Party for Change
PO Box 6902 Boroko, NCD
Papua New Guinea
Fax: + (675) 321 7986
Email: admin@pngparty.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 14 and 15 May 2013 an unprecedented nationwide protest in the form of a “haus krai” (house of mourning) took place against the country’s high rates of violence against women. Leaders of the protest stated that they “do not support death penalty and violent and inhuman means of punishment as they go against the inherent dignity of the person and are against the Christian principles and values of equality in dignity for all people.”

Although never formally abolished, the death penalty has not been implemented in Papua New Guinea (PNG) since 1954 when the last hanging took place. It is believed that 67 people were executed by hanging under the Australian colonial administration of PNG. On 28 January 2013, the Attorney General reported that 10 people were under death sentence in Papua New Guinea. The Prime Minister has since stated that among the methods it is considering is death by firing squad, on the basis that the government considered it more “humane and inexpensive than other methods,” and that an execution centre would be attached to a new prison to be built in a remote location. Various governments in Papua New Guinea have over decades discussed increasing the scope of the death penalty for crimes including rape and other violent crimes.

More than two-thirds of all countries in the world have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Most recently, in 2012 Mongolia and Benin ratified and Madagascar signed the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. In recent years, with the exception of eight reported death sentences in three separate cases in Papua New Guinea since 2009, the Pacific region did not record executions or death sentences. These figures are taken from reported cases in Papua New Guinea, however there may be other unreported cases where the death penalty has been imposed.

The last known execution to take place in the Pacific region was in 1982 in Tonga. Nauru, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga are abolitionist in practice, while Fiji has only retained the death penalty for military crimes. All other Pacific countries are abolitionist for all crimes – their laws do not provide for the death penalty for any crime.

Name: N/A

Gender m/f: N/A

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