

PUBLIC

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***FURTHER INFORMATION ON MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION***

**(See AI Index: ASA 35/05/99, 21 January 1999; and ASA 35/10/98, 27 October 1998)**

**Leo Echegaray  
PHILIPPINES**



Leo Echegaray was executed as scheduled on 5 February 1999.

Echegaray was escorted to the lethal injection chamber in the National Penitentiary in Manila at 5.45am local time on 5 February. He was allowed to have visitors with him until 11.00am.

The chief of the National Bilibid Prisons Hospital pronounced Leo Echegaray dead at 3.19pm, 8 minutes after he was injected with the lethal chemicals.

On 4 February 1999, President Joseph Estrada - who was the only person who could have granted Echegaray a last-minute reprieve - had ordered the telephone hotline linking the presidential palace and the National Penitentiary to be cut, saying he had no intention of granting clemency. Another last-minute appeal by the Free Legal Assistance Group [FLAG] arguing that prison officials had made unauthorized changes to the prison execution manual was rejected by the Supreme Court.

Journalists who were among the 27 people allowed to witness the execution were fighting over front row seats to get the best view. One called the execution "a bit of a circus", another an "execution fiesta" [see extracts from news coverage on 5 February 1999 on page 2].

Reports by Reuters on 4 February 1999 that a doctor would be present throughout the execution to "monitor [Echegaray's] heartbeat" could not be confirmed by Amnesty International.

**For the time being, no further action by the health professional network is required.  
Another action update will be issued before the death penalty law will  
again be discussed in the Congress in the Philippines.**

**AFP**Feed Date: **05/02/99**Feed Time: **02:59**Keywords: **Philippines, death**Language: **English**

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**Subject: Philippines rape convict taken to execution chamber**

MANILA, Feb 5 (AFP) - Rape convict Leo Echegaray was roused from his cell and transported to the death chamber in handcuffs at dawn Friday, nine hours before his scheduled execution by lethal injection, an AFP reporter saw.

The first criminal to be put to death here in 23 years hung his head and clutched a copy of the Bible as prison security guards struggled to get him past several hundred journalists to a waiting van.

The 38-year-old decorator looked tired and emaciated in his tangerine prison issue as he was escorted to the execution chamber one kilometer (half mile) from his cell in the maximum security compound of the National Penitentiary in southern Manila at 5:45 a.m. (2145 GMT Thursday).

He did not reply to questions shouted at him by reporters and his guards had to hold him by the arms to steady him. [...]

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**AFP**Feed Date: **05/02/99**Feed Time: **12:08**Keywords: **Philippines, death, scene**Language: **English**

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**Subject: Grotesque circus for first execution in Philippines in 23 years**

MANILA, Feb 5 (AFP) - Journalists fought over front row seats for the execution in the Philippines Friday of Leo Echegaray, and then climbed over his corpse to make sure that the convicted rapist was well and truly dead.

Celebrities and star-gazers, outlandishly attired doomsday preachers and a priest in track shorts and running shoes made for a colorful sideshow to the serious business of putting to death the unrepentant part-time decorator.

"It's a bit of a circus eh," said Australian journalist Craig Skehan. The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper reporter told AFP he had not quite seen anything like it elsewhere.

"Shall we call it an 'execution fiesta'?" another foreign journalist was overheard telling a colleague. [...]

The first judicial killing in the Philippines in 23 years degenerated into ghoulish scenes in the early evening as a large posse of television and radio reporters chased the funeral hearse to a northern Manila morgue and flipped the death shroud aside to give the corpse a minute examination.

"I'm here at the funeral parlor and I'm holding Leo's leg," a male reporter broadcast on DZBB radio.

"It's a bit warm and it looks like he is only sleeping." [...]