

SINGAPORE Natthapong Khwan-on (m), Thai national

Thai National Natthapong Khwan-o, sentenced to death for the murder of a taxi driver is reportedly scheduled to be executed on 6 March 2002. It is unclear whether he has appealed against the conviction. The Thai embassy in Singapore is said to be preparing to petition the Singaporean President to commute the sentence.

Natthapong Khwan-on was sentenced to death in December 2001 for the murder of an elderly taxi driver, who he also robbed of his mobile phone and wallet on 19 November 2001. The Singapore High Court rejected Natthapong Khwan-on's defence that he was mentally ill at the time of the offence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is mandatory in Singapore for murder, drug trafficking, treason and certain firearms offences.

Singapore, with a population of four million, is believed to have one of the highest rates of executions per capita in the world. Recent government figures show that out of 340 people executed between 1991 and 2000, 89 were executed for murder. Between 1996 and 2000, over half those executed for murder were foreign nationals. Executions are by hanging and take place on Friday mornings at dawn. Families of convicts are normally only informed of the impending execution one week beforehand. There is almost no public debate about the use of the death penalty in the country.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The death penalty is an inherently unjust and arbitrary punishment, however heinous the crime for which it is inflicted. Studies have shown that it is more likely to be imposed on those who are poorer, less educated and more vulnerable than average. The death penalty is irrevocable, yet the risk of error in applying it is inescapable. While Amnesty International recognizes the need to combat violent crime, there is no convincing evidence that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than other punishments.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- urging the President to commute the death sentence passed on Natthapong Khwan-on;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of crime, but pointing out that if the execution is carried out, it will only cause more suffering for the relatives of Natthapong Khwan-on;
- expressing your unconditional opposition to the death penalty as a violation of one of the most fundamental of human rights - the right to life;
- recognizing the need to combat violent crime, but emphasizing that there is no proof that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than other punishments, and appealing to the authorities to find a more humane way to tackle this problem.

APPEALS TO:

The President

His Excellency S R Nathan
Office of the President
Istana, Orchard Road
Republic of Singapore 0922
Telegrams: President S R Nathan, Singapore
Faxes:+ 65 738 4673
Salutation:Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

The Prime Minister
The Honourable Goh Chok Tong
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Faxes:+ 65 732 4627
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Minister of Law
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Ministry of Law
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Minister of Home Affairs
Wong Kan Seng
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Faxes:+ 65 734 4420
Salutation:Dear Minister

and to diplomatic representatives of Singapore accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.