

KINGDOM OF THAILAND at least 36 people on death row

Amnesty International is gravely concerned that at least 36 people face imminent execution having exhausted all appeals against their death sentences. These fears are heightened by the execution of five men on 8 October 1999, bringing the number of executions so far this year to 13. This represents an alarming acceleration since the resumption of executions in January 1996.

The five men executed on 8 October (Amnat Aekapt, 26, Somporn Cheuycheunjit, 31, Anant Koatsombat, 47, Surasak Yitsung, 36, and Somkid Wannachote, 51) had all been convicted of murder. They were executed by machine gun at Bang Kwaang Maximum Security Prison in Bangkok. Media reports said that this was the largest number of executions carried out in one day at the prison.

Amnesty International fears that more executions have already been scheduled, but, as the authorities provide no information about executions, they are only known about they have been carried out.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are believed to be around 160 prisoners on death row in Thailand, at least 36 of whom have exhausted all their appeals. Since the authorities release little information about the death penalty, names and accurate numbers are not known.

The death penalty is mandatory in Thailand for premeditated murder, murder of an official on government business, regicide, and the production and import of heroin. It is discretionary for robbery, rape, kidnapping, arson and bombing if death results, insurrection, treason and espionage, possession of more than 100 grams of heroin or amphetamines, and aircraft hijacking. Until January 1996, when a man was executed for murder, no executions had been carried out for nine years, despite continuing imposition of the death penalty. A further two men were executed in 1997 and one man in 1998. In October 1997 Article 31 of the new constitution upheld the death penalty, stating "*Lawful execution is not considered torture or cruel or inhumane in this case*".

The increase in executions may be linked to a growing public concern about crime and the perceived ineffectiveness of the judicial system. However there is no evidence to show that the death penalty is an effective deterrent to crime.

Although there have been marked improvements in the human rights situation in the last seven years, the continued use of the death penalty and an increase in the number of executions is a matter of grave concern.

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

- condemning the execution of five men on 8 October 1999, and expressing concern that 13 people have now been executed in Thailand so far this year;
- expressing concern that at least 36 people who have exhausted all their appeals against their death sentences may be scheduled for execution;
- urging the authorities to establish an immediate moratorium on all executions;
- urging the authorities to commute all outstanding death sentences and take steps to remove the death penalty from all legislation;

- expressing Amnesty International's unconditional opposition to the death penalty as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in accordance with international standards.

APPEALS TO (please note that it can be difficult to get a fax tone for the Minister of Interior. The best time to try is during office hours local time +7 GMT):

Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai
Office of the Prime Minister
Government House
Nakhorn Pathom Road
Bangkok 10300
Thailand

Telegrams: Prime Minister, Bangkok, Thailand

Faxes: + 66 2 280 1443

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Sanan Kachornprasart
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Faxes: + 66 2 223 8851

Salutation: Dear Minister

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and to diplomatic representatives of Kingdom of Thailand accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 November 1999.