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THAILAND: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS FIRST EXECUTION IN NINE YEARS

Amnesty International was shocked to learn that the Thai authorities carried out the first execution in the country since 1987 this past weekend.

On Sunday, 28 January a firing squad killed Prommas Leamsai, 38, by machine gun at Bangkwang Maximum Security Prison in Bangkok.

“The resumption of the death penalty after nine years sets a very negative precedent,” Amnesty International said today.

“In a region where the death penalty is increasingly being used, Thailand was an encouraging exception. However, it now appears that the government has decided to reactivate the use of the death penalty to warn criminals that it is still on the books.”

More than 100 people are currently on death row in Thailand. In September 1995 the Ministry of Interior threatened to execute an unnamed prisoner convicted of multiple murders, but the execution never took place. At the time Amnesty International issued an urgent appeal to the Thai Government not to carry out the execution.

The death penalty in Thailand is mandatory for premeditated murder; the murder of an official on government business; production or trafficking of heroin, and the murder of the King. It is optional for rape, robbery, kidnapping, arson and bombing if death results, insurrection, treason, airline hijacking and espionage, and possession of more than 100 grams of heroin.

Prommas Leamsai was reportedly convicted of murdering a policeman in the 1980s. His execution took place in great secrecy. According to a Ministry of Interior statement, Prommas was considered to be beyond rehabilitation. The statement also said that he was killed to set an example to other criminals.

“This execution is a worrying development in light of the fact that there are scores of people on death row in Thailand,” Amnesty International said.

“As Banharn Silapa-archa, the Prime Minister elected in July 1995, is also the Interior Minister, we are concerned that this move reflects a shift in policy at the highest levels of the Thai Government.”

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