

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 39/05/97

UA 350/97

Executions / Fear of further executions

6 November 1997

THAILAND Phnom Thaweesuk, aged 26

Boonchote Pongprahm, aged 38

Two men were shot by firing squad on 5 November 1997 in the first executions in Thailand for almost two years. The executions have raised serious fears for others on death row in Thailand.

Phnom Thaweesuk and Boonchote Pongprahm, both convicted of rape and murder, were executed at Bangkwang maximum security prison in Nonthaburi province, north of Bangkok, the capital. Death sentences are not always reported in Thailand, and Amnesty International was unaware that these two men were under sentence of death.

As with all executions in Thailand, Phnom Thaweesuk and Boonchote Pongprahm were killed in secret and without prior warning. Amnesty International now fears that any of the other 158 prisoners on death row in Thailand could be similarly executed at any time.

Previously, the last execution in Thailand was in January 1996, when Prommas Leamsai was killed by firing squad. As the first execution in nine years, it set an ominous precedent for the revival of the death penalty.

Article 31 of the new constitution, adopted in October 1997, allows for the death penalty. The death penalty in Thailand is mandatory for premeditated murder; the murder of an official on government business; production or trafficking of heroin, and regicide. 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 or amphetamines. At least 37 death sentences have been imposed this year, for murder, rape and murder, and drugs trafficking.

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

- expressing deep regret that the Thai authorities executed Phnom Thaweesuk and Boonchote Pongprahm;
- seeking assurances that the 158 other prisoners on death row in Thailand will not be executed;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of violent crime, but voicing 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, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stressing that the death penalty has never been shown to be an effective deterrent to such crimes and is brutalizing to all involved in its application;
- calling on the Royal Thai Government to abolish the death penalty by amending the new Constitution.

APPEALS TO:

(*) PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING CORRECTION:

Minister of Interior is now Sanan Kachornprasart
Minister of Foreign Affairs is now Surin Pitsuwan
(attorney general remains the same)

Snoh Thienthong

Minister of the Interior (*)

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Salutation: Dear Minister

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Attorney General
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Telegrams: Attorney General, Bangkok, Thailand

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

Prachuab Chaisarn, Minister of Foreign Affairs (*)
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Telegrams: Foreign Minister, Bangkok, Thailand

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Justice and Human Rights Commission
House of Representatives
U-Thong Nai Road
Bangkok 10300
THAILAND

and to diplomatic representatives of THAILAND accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 December 1997.