

Media Advisory

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Thailand: Prime Minister asked to halt executions

Following the execution of five drug traffickers last week and the imminent execution of six more, Amnesty International's Secretary General today wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister of Thailand urging him to use his executive powers to issue a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

The appeal, on behalf of Amnesty International's one million members, is in response to the Thai government's recent announcement that it would "speed up the execution of drug convicts".

While recognizing the gravity of the illicit drug problem in Thailand and the need for the government to uphold the rule of law, Amnesty International believes the death penalty will provide no solution. Instead it will reduce respect for the value of human life and risk entrenching a culture of violence. There is no evidence that the death penalty acts as a more effective deterrent against crimes than other forms of punishment.

The open letter states that because the death penalty is an irreversible punishment, there is a strong risk that trial errors may lead to the execution of innocent people. This risk is compounded by reports of torture and ill-treatment of criminal suspects by police in order to coerce confessions.

More than half the countries in the world have now abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Amnesty International is hoping that the Thai government will join the majority and demonstrate its respect

for human life by halting all executions and eventually abolishing it in law.

Background

There are currently 212 persons reportedly on death row pending appeal, including 145 convicted for drug offences.

The use of methamphetamines in Thailand has increased dramatically during the last four years. The Thai authorities claim that neighbouring Myanmar is the source of these drugs, but has been seemingly unable to restrict their entry into Thailand.

According to recent press reports, Siwa Saengmanee, the Corrections Department Director General, stated that a series of executions of drug traffickers would begin after the traditional Buddhist new year in mid-April. He also said that executions would be carried out daily, except for Buddhist holidays.

For a copy of the letter sent to Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, please contact mcatsani@amnesty.org or +44 207 413 5729
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