AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
NEWS SERVICE 152/94

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

NOTE: The item on "Areas Under Jurisidiction of Palestinian Authority: Death in Custody" in News Service 150 bears the wrong index number. Instead of MDE 15/WU 05/94, that item should be indexed MDE 15/WU 12/94. Thank you.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Pakistan - 27 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 81/94

Myanmar - 20 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 99/94

India - 16 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 129/94

Kosovo - 20 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Algeria - first week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

France - second week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

North and South Korea - CANCELLED

Sri Lanka - 15 July - SEE NS 146/94

Brazil - 14 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO: AI STRONGLY CONDEMNS FIRST EXECUTION IN ALMOST 15 YEARS

The Trinidad and Tobago government flagrantly violated its own national law and international standards when they hanged a man to death today and deceived the judicial body hearing his appeal for a stay of execution, Amnesty International said.

"The Attorney General said they wouldn't execute Glen Ashby before his appeal was heard, yet this is exactly what they did," Amnesty International said. "Tragically his stay of execution was granted more or less at the same time as he was killed by the state. We strongly condemn this injustice."

The execution of Ashby was the first in the country in 15 years -- violating international standards and flying in the face of the worldwide trend towards abolishing the death penalty. The manner in which he died -- after assurances that his execution would not go ahead and with appeals pending -- casts a shadow upon the international reputation of Trinidad and Tobago, Amnesty International said.

Glen Ashby, convicted of murder, had been on death row for four years and 11 months. In one month's time, his lengthy wait on death row would have constituted inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment -- automatically commuting his death sentence to life imprisonment.

Ashby's execution went ahead at around 6:30am local Trinidad and Tobago time, despite an undertaking made yesterday by the Trinidad and Tobago Attorney General Keith Sobion that Ashby's execution would not proceed until all applications for a stay of execution had been exhausted.

In addition to the stay of execution granted by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, Trinidad and Tobago's final court of appeal, a hearing was also pending with the Court of Appeal of Trinidad and Tobago, while another application had been made to the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

"The Attorney General apparently went directly to the Registrar of the High Court, by-passing all appeals, to order the execution carried out," Amnesty International said. "Attorney General Sobion deliberately misled the Privy Council that no execution would take place."

Amnesty International can only conclude that those members of the government who have been adamant that executions should resume to please public opinion have finally achieved their objective. On previous occasions, the Minister of National Security, Russell Huggins, has also made inflammatory remarks regarding prisoners in death row and lawyers defending them.

For example, on 21 August, Huggins said: "In this country, certain persons are overly concerned with protecting the rights of the criminal... So on Monday, when they file their motions to stop the hangings, you must get up and let your voices be heard."

The breach of national and international standards, which provide that no execution may "be carried out pending any appeal or other recourse procedure", and the disregard for pending, relevant appeals seem to indicate a determination by the government of Trinidad and Tobago to execute, regardless of judicial rules and procedures.

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