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Indonesia: Fifth execution confirms shocking new trend of secrecy

The execution of a Pakistani man in Indonesia on Sunday, carried out in secret, is a shocking and regressive step, said Amnesty International.

According to media reports, Muhammad Abdul Hafeez, 44, was executed by firing squad in the early hours of Sunday morning. Hafeez is the fifth person to be put to death this year since Indonesia resumed executions in March after a four year hiatus. A further five individuals are believed to be at imminent risk of execution.

Papang Hidayat, Amnesty International's Indonesia Researcher, commented:

“This latest death by firing squad highlights the deplorable and retrograde trend in Indonesia to shroud executions in secrecy. The complete lack of transparency is not only devastating for the individuals and their families; it can also prevent last minute appeals for a stay of execution.

“Such actions fly in the face of the Indonesian government's commitment to uphold human rights. We urge the authorities not to carry out any other death sentences. Anymore executions would also further undermine the government's efforts to protect Indonesian nationals that face the death penalty overseas.

“With these clandestine executions it appears the government is also trying to prevent a full and informed public debate on the use of the death penalty.”

Background

Muhammad Abdul Hafeez was arrested at the Soekarno-Hatta International Airport on 26 June 2001 for allegedly smuggling 900 grams of heroin into Indonesia. He was sentenced to death by the Tangerang District Court on 28 November 2001.

The use of the death penalty for drug-related offences does not meet the threshold of the “most serious crimes” as prescribed under international law.

Amnesty International is not aware that the families or representatives of the five individuals executed this year were informed in advance.

There are at least 130 people under sentence of death in Indonesia. Around half of those on death row, many of whom are foreign nationals, have been convicted of drug-related offences. So far in 2013 at least eight people have been sentenced to death. At least 12 people were sentenced to death in 2012.

Death sentences in Indonesia are carried out by firing squad. The prisoner has the choice of standing or sitting, and can decide whether to have their eyes covered by a blindfold or hood. Firing squads are made up of 12 people, three of whose rifles are loaded with live ammunition, while the other nine are loaded with blanks. The squad fires from a distance of between five and 10 metres.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception.