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Mongolia: moratorium on executions welcomed

Amnesty International welcomes the announcement made by the government of Mongolia today declaring an official moratorium on executions in the country.

Amnesty International believes President Tsakhia Elbegdorj has taken a bold move for the protection of human rights in Mongolia and welcomes this important development as a key step toward full abolition of the death penalty.

“The government of Mongolia has shown that it has a strong commitment to human rights by introducing a moratorium on the death penalty. Amnesty International urges other countries in the region to follow Mongolia’s example,” said Roseann Rife, Amnesty International Asia-Pacific deputy director.

Asia continues to execute more individuals than the rest of the world combined. Amnesty International estimates at least 1,838 individuals were executed in 11 countries in Asia in 2008.

In China, Mongolia, Vietnam, and North Korea, executions and death penalty proceedings are shrouded in secrecy and a lack of transparency.

“Mongolia must quickly amend its law on state secrecy to end the lack of transparency in the application of the death penalty. Transparency is an essential element of an open and free society but also an important step towards abolition,” said Roseann Rife.

The President of Mongolia commuted the death sentences of at least three people in 2009. Executions are carried out in secret in Mongolia and no official statistics on death sentences or executions are made available. Prison conditions for death row inmates are reported to be poor. Families are not notified in advance of the execution and the bodies of those executed are not returned to the family.

More than two-thirds of the world’s countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. In 2008, 106 countries voted in favour of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution calling for a moratorium on executions.

“We look forward to Mongolia’s support for the UNGA resolution in 2010 and urge other nations in the region to follow suit,” said Roseann Rife.

In 2010 Mongolia’s human rights situation will also be reviewed under the United Nations Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review.

Background

The UN General Assembly will consider a third resolution calling for a moratorium on executions in 2010. Mongolia voted against the UNGA resolutions adopted in 2007 and 2008, as has China, India, Indonesia, North Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Japan. In 2008, 106 countries voted in favour of the resolution, 46 voted against and 34 abstained.

Amnesty International believes the death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and opposes the death penalty in all cases. The death penalty is discriminatory, used disproportionately against the poor, minorities and members of racial, ethnic and religious communities and it the ultimate act of state violence. There is no evidence that it is any more effective in reducing crime than other harsh punishments.