

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Zambia: Forty-four soldiers to be executed**

Amnesty International is strongly urging President Levy Mwanawasa of Zambia to use his constitutional prerogative to immediately commute the death sentences confirmed by the Supreme Court of Zambia on 44 soldiers for their role in a failed 1997 coup.

While Amnesty International recognizes the right of states to bring to justice all those suspected of involvement in criminal acts, the organization believes that executing the soldiers will be a violation of their fundamental human rights.

"These men have not been convicted of any offence which caused the death or injury of another and consequently international standards would prohibit the use of the death penalty against them," Amnesty International said. 'Furthermore, it appears that several of the accused were tortured and that evidence obtained as a result of torture was subsequently used against them during their trials. To execute these men would be a violation of international law.'

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all circumstances, considering it to be a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. 'The evidence in support of abolition of the death penalty becomes more compelling with each passing year,' the organization said. 'Everywhere experience shows that executions brutalize those involved in the process. Nowhere has it been shown that the death penalty has resulted in a reduction in crime.'

There have been important steps towards abolition of the death penalty across Southern Africa in recent years. Angola, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa have all abolished the death penalty. In addition the President of Malawi has given an undertaking not to authorize any executions as long as he is in office.

Under Article 59 of the Zambian Constitution, the President has the prerogative to pardon a convicted person or to reduce the sentence in any way.

Until such a time as the death penalty is abolished, Amnesty International is urging President Mwanawasa to:

commute the death sentences of all those convicted of crimes for which the death sentence is mandatory; and

declare an immediate moratorium on the use of the death penalty, for Zambia to be in accordance with international and regional trends towards abolition of the death penalty.

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