

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 82/92

Death Penalty

14 October 1992

BELIZE:

Dean Edwardo VASQUEZ

Dean Edwardo Vasquez, aged 26, is scheduled to be executed on 30 October 1992 in Belize City, Belize. He was sentenced to death by hanging by the Supreme Court of Belize on 21 June 1991 for the murder of his common-law wife on 16 August 1990 (see UA 334/91, AMR 16/04/91 of 10 October 1991).

All the legal appeals made on behalf of Dean Edwardo Vasquez in Belize have been rejected. On 17 September 1991 an appeal to the Belize Court of Appeal was dismissed and his sentence affirmed. In October 1991, the Advisory Council again affirmed the sentence and the case went to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) in the United Kingdom. In July 1992 the JCPC turned down Vasquez' appeal. He has now exhausted all legal appeals.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is mandatory for murder in Belize. The last execution was that of Kent Bowers carried out in June 1985, despite a petition for clemency reportedly signed by 2,500 people. According to government figures between 1979 and 1985, 28 death sentences were imposed and one execution was carried out.

Four people are currently under sentence of death for murder in Belize. Catalino O'Niel, sentenced to death for murder in March 1991, has had his appeal to the JCPC turned down. A date for his execution has not yet been set, all the legal avenues for appeal have been exhausted (see UA 222/91, AMR 16/03/91 of 28 June 1991). Amnesty International is appealing for his sentence to be commuted. Ellis Taibo, convicted and sentenced to death on 2 August 1992, had his appeal to the Belize Court of Appeal dismissed in September 1992. He is currently applying to the Advisory Council for commutation of his sentence. Francisco Coronquie, sentenced to death for murder in May 1992, is due to have his case heard by the Belize Court of Appeal in January 1993.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English in your own language:

- expressing grave concern that Dean Vasquez is scheduled to be executed on 30 October 1992;
- welcoming the fact that no executions have been carried out in the last seven years in Belize;
- pointing out that the resumption of executions would be a retrograde step in the protection of human rights for all Belize citizens;

- highlighting some or all of the following:
 - * the death penalty has been abolished in five Caribbean countries;

- * all death sentences have been commuted in Grenada;
- * legislation, to at least limit the use of the death penalty, is being prepared in Jamaica;
- * worldwide, over 40 percent of all countries have abolished the death penalty;
- * execution is irrevocable and, despite the most stringent judicial safeguards, can be inflicted on the innocent;
- * it is brutalizing to all who are involved in the process;
- * it has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishment;

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- * it is arbitrary and often falls disproportionately on minority and underprivileged groups;
- * it denies the widely accepted principle of rehabilitating the offender;
- * it does not alleviate the suffering caused to the victims of the crime;

In appeals to the Belize Advisory Council only:

- urging that they reconsider their previous decision in this case and that they now recommend the Governor General to commute the death sentence of Dean Vasquez:

In appeals to the Governor General only:

- urging her to commute the death sentence of Dean Vasquez.

APPEALS TO

1) Governor General:
 Her Excellency
 Dr. the Hon. Dame Minita E. Gordon
 GCMG, GCVO, JP(s)SIBA
 Governor-General
 Office of the Governor-General
 Belize House,
 Belmopan, Belize
**Telegrams: Governor General,
 Belmopan, Belize**
Telexes: 211 BH
Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Belize Advisory Council:
 Mr. Edwin Flowers
 Chairman
 Belize Advisory Council
 c/o Ms. S. McSweeney, Secretary
 Ministry of Finance,
 Belmopan, Belize
**Telegrams: Mr E Flowers, c/o Ministry
 of Finance,
 Belmopan, Belize**
Faxes: + 501 2 31149
Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Human Rights Commission of Belize:
 Human Rights Commission of Belize
 PO Box 617
 Belize City,
 Belize

2) Weekly Newspaper
The Belize Times
 PO Box 506,
 Belize City
 Belize

3) Dean Vasquez' lawyer:

Mr. Simeon Sampson
85 Allenby Street
Belize City, Belize

and to diplomatic representatives of Belize accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 October 1992.