

07 March

2007

UA 57/07 Death penalty/imminent execution
BANGLADESH Shayek Abdur Rahman (m)
 Siddikul Islam alias Bangla Bhai (m)
 Four other men

Six men, including the two named above, were sentenced to death in May 2006 for involvement in setting off bombs. All their appeals have been rejected, and the President rejected a petition for clemency on 4 March. They could now be hanged at any time, though the President does still have the power to stop the executions and commute their sentences.

The six are members of the banned Islamist group Jamiat-ul-Mojahedin Bangladesh (JMB). The authorities have accused the group of involvement in a series of bomb blasts and other attacks since at least 2003. Those targeted included members of the judiciary, journalists, civil society activists, and places of popular entertainment including cinemas.

The six men were tried and sentenced to death for involvement in an attack that killed two judges in the city of Jhalokathi in November 2005. In August 2006 the High Court in Jhalokathi rejected their automatic appeal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prisoners sentenced to death in Bangladesh have an automatic appeal hearing before the High Court. If this fails they can also lodge additional appeals with the High Court. They can then appeal to the Supreme Court, and after that they have the right to appeal to the President for clemency. Executions are carried out after all these appeals have been exhausted.

The number of prisoners sentenced to death has increased in recent years. In 2005, at least 217 men and one woman were sentenced to death, and at least three men were executed by hanging.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The death penalty is an inherently unjust and arbitrary punishment, however heinous the crime for which it is inflicted. Studies globally have shown that it is more likely to be imposed on those who are poorer, less educated and from marginalized segments of society. The death penalty is irrevocable, yet the risk of error in its application is inescapable. Amnesty International recognizes the need to combat violent crime, but the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Bangla, English or your own language:

- saying that Amnesty International recognizes the gravity of the offences of which Shayek Abdur Rahman, Siddikul Islam Bangla Bhai and four other men have been convicted, but opposes the death penalty in all cases, as it violates the most fundamental right of every human being, the right to life;
- urging the president to commute the men's death sentences;
- urging the president to call for a moratorium on executions, with a view to abolition of the death penalty, in line with the April 2005 UN Commission on Human Rights resolution on the question of the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

President Iajuddin Ahmed
President Office
Bangabhaban,
Dhaka
Bangladesh

Fax: +8802 9566593

Salutation: Dear Mr President

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Bangladesh accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 April 2007.
