

PUBLIC

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9 March 2000

Further information on EXTRA 15/00 (ASA 17/08/00, 2 March 2000) Death penalty / execution

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (PRC) Hu Changqing

On 8 March 2000, the Intermediate People's Court of Nanchang City in Jiangxi Province ordered the immediate execution of Hu Changqing with the approval of the Supreme People's Court.

Hu Changqing was sentenced to death on 15 February 2000, by the Nanchang Intermediate People's Court, for various crimes of corruption involving sums of up to seven million yuan (US\$843,000). This took place between 1995 and 1999, when he was working first as a senior official in the State Council and then as vice-governor of Jiangxi.

In a report carried by the official news agency, Xinhua, it was stated that the case of Hu Changqing had "created an extremely bad impact in society because he was a senior cadre". His execution was reportedly necessary because "A criminal who has committed such very serious crime must be put to death in order to set straight state law and calm the people's anger and in order to set straight party work style and oppose corruption; no less penalty will suffice".

It is probable that the execution of Hu Changqing, the highest-ranking official to be executed for economic crimes since 1949, took place to coincide with the annual National People's Congress, where corruption is high on the agenda, and to give a signal that the authorities' current campaign against corruption continues, regardless of position. It was reported in Xinhua, that other officials should "absorb the lesson" of Hu Changqing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty continues to be used extensively, arbitrarily, and frequently as a result of political interference. There are often mass executions before major events or public holidays, such as 1 January and the Chinese New Year. Many of those executed are accused of relatively minor crimes which might not normally attract such a harsh sentence.

Based on incomplete public reports for 1998, Amnesty International recorded at least 2,701 death sentences and at least 1,769 confirmed executions. From 1990 to the end of 1998, Amnesty International recorded more than 25,400 death sentences and 16,600 executions. These statistics, however, are believed to fall far short of the real figures, as only a fraction of death sentences and executions carried out in the country are publicly reported. Even based on this limited record, the government continues to execute many more people than the rest of the world put together. Execution is by shooting or lethal injection.

A revision to the Criminal Code in March 1997 confirmed the increasing scope for the use of the death penalty.

* Please note the name of the city in which Hu Changqing was sentenced is Nanchang and not Nancheng as given in Extra 15/00

Thank you to all those who sent appeals on this case. No further action is requested. However, if you would like to send a further round of appeals, you

may follow the recommended actions below.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Chinese or your own language:

- expressing dismay at the recent execution of Hu Changqing;
- urging that the arbitrary and massive use of the death penalty in China be stopped;
- urging the government to exclude non violent crimes, such as corruption, from the death penalty, as recommended by the United Nations Special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions;
- expressing opposition to the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment, and as a violation of the right to life, as guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

APPEALS TO: please note that faxes in China are unreliable and often do not work outside office hours (GMT + 8):

President of Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China

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Zuigao Renmin Fayuan

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Salutation: Dear President

Chairman of the National People's Congress

LI Peng Weiyuanzhang

Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui

Great Hall of the People

Beijingshi

People's Republic of China

Telegrams:Chairman National People's Congress, Beijing, China

Salutation: Dear Chairman

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and to diplomatic representatives of the People's Republic of China accredited to your country.