

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 66/00Death penalty/imminent execution

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (PRC) Cheng Kejie, m, age 66

A senior member of China's parliament was convicted of corruption and sentenced to death on 31 July 2000. Cheng Kejie is reportedly the most senior official ever sentenced to death for corruption.

The former Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), went on trial at the Beijing No.1 Intermediate People's Court on 26 June. The sentence was announced at the last of three public hearings, on 13, 14 and 31 July. He has 10 days from the ruling to appeal to the Beijing Higher People's Court.

According to a report from the official Chinese news agency, *Xinhua*, Cheng Kejie's possessions have been confiscated and he has been deprived of his political rights for the rest of his life.

According to *Xinhua*, Cheng Kejie "abused his powers to wantonly accept bribes, and reap a huge amount of illegal gains. He is ideologically and morally degenerate and is a typical corrupt element". Cheng was found guilty, in collaboration with his mistress Li Ping, of taking 41m yuan (US\$5million) in bribes while he was deputy secretary of the Party Committee and Chairman of the People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. It is alleged that, between 1994 and 1998, the two accepted bribes in return for awarding contracts and giving promotion to other officials, and used Cheng's position to secure loans. *Xinhua* stated that Cheng had offered to return all his illegal gains to the state.

Cheng Kejie was removed from his NPC post in March 2000, the day before the opening of the annual parliamentary session. He was expelled from the Communist Party in April.

Li Ping and others allegedly involved in the case are being prosecuted separately.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty continues to be used extensively, arbitrarily, and frequently as a result of political interference. There are often mass executions during major events or on public holidays in China, such as 1 January and the Chinese New Year. Execution is by shooting or lethal injection.

Only a fraction of death sentences and executions carried out in the country are publicly reported. In 1998 alone, based on the incomplete public reports, Amnesty International recorded 2,701 death sentences and 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 are believed to fall far short of the real figures, but even based on this limited record China executes many more people than the rest of the world put together.

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

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

- urging the Chinese authorities to commute the death sentence passed on Cheng Kejie;
- urging the Chinese authorities not to sentence to death Li Ping or others prosecuted in connection with Cheng Kejie's case;
- urging that the arbitrary and massive use of the death penalty in China be stopped;
- 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):

Premier of the People's Republic of China

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Telex: 210070 FMPC CN or 22478 MFERT CN

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Salutation: Your Excellency

President of the Supreme People's Court

XIAO Yang Yuanzhang

Zuigao Renmin Fayuan

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People's Republic of China

Telegram: President, Supreme People's Court, Beijing, China

Salutation: Dear President

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY