

URGENT ACTION

EXECUTIONS TEMPORARILY HALTED IN PAKISTAN

A temporary halt to planned executions was ordered by the Pakistan Prime Minister on 18 August until he has spoken to the President, Asif Ali Zardari, who is opposed to the death penalty. Thousands will be at risk of execution after President Zardari's term in office ends on 8 September.

At least eight men were scheduled to be executed across Pakistan between 20 and 25 August. In Sindh province: **Attaullah alias Qasim, Muhammad Azam alias Sharif and Jalal alias Abdul Jalil**, who are in Sukkur Jail, **Behram Khan and Shafqat Hussain** in Karachi Central Prison; and in the Punjab; **Muhammad Munir Hussain** in Vehari Jail, **Zulfiqar Ali Khan** in Kot Lakhpat Jail, and **Mohammad Ameen**. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif halted these planned executions on Sunday 18 August, after the President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, asked to speak to him about plans to resume carrying out the death penalty.

Shafqat Hussain and Mohammad Ameen were juveniles when the crimes were committed. Pakistan is a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which forbid the imposition of capital punishment for crimes committed by persons below 18 years of age. Shafqat Hussain claims he was subjected to ill-treatment during interrogation under police custody.

The prisoners have all been convicted of various crimes that include murder and kidnapping. Behram Khan claims he was subjected to ill-treatment during interrogation under police custody and that he did not receive a fair trial after he failed to bribe law enforcement officials. Munir Hussain's family say he suffers from mental illness and his lawyers are trying to arrange an independent mental health examination. Attaullah and Muhammad Azam were convicted for killing a Shi'a Muslim doctor. They and Jalal are reported to be members of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, an armed group that has claimed responsibility for a number of attacks, targeting the Shi'a Muslim minority, that have claimed hundreds of lives. Zulfiqar Ali Khan was arrested for murder on 14 April 1998. According to his lawyer, he committed the crime in self-defence. During the 14 years he has been on death row, Zulfiqar Ali Khan has gained a Masters Degree in Political Science and a Master of Business Administration. He is also known as 'The Educator' at Adiala Jail as he has contributed to the education of hundreds of other inmates while in prison.

Please write immediately in English, Urdu or your own language:

- Welcome the Prime Minister's decision to halt executions and urging the Pakistan government to establish an official moratorium on all executions in the country as a first step towards abolition of the death penalty in line with four UN General Assembly resolutions;
- Calling on the Pakistan government to ensure that any measures taken to combat crime do not violate human rights standards regarding law enforcement and the right to a fair trial; and
- Urging the Pakistan President and government to commute all existing death sentences.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 01 OCTOBER 2013 TO:

President

Asif Ali Zardari

Pakistan Secretariat, Islamabad

Pakistan

Fax: +92 51 920 4974

Email: <http://www.presidentofpakistan.gov.pk/index.php?lang=en&opc=8>

[v.pk/index.php?lang=en&opc=8](http://www.presidentofpakistan.gov.pk/index.php?lang=en&opc=8)

Salutation: Dear President

Also send copies to your own government in your country.

Prime Minister

Nawaz Sharif

Prime Minister House

Islamabad

Pakistan

Fax: +92 51 921 3780, +92 51 922 1596

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 224/13. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA33/010/2013/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More than 8,000 prisoners are at risk of being executed should the government of Pakistan resume the implementation of the death penalty. The Interior Minister reportedly said that 450 convicts were awaiting imminent execution as they have exhausted their legal appeals. These executions would be the first to be authorized by the government of Pakistan since late 2008, with the exception of the execution of a soldier by military authorities in late 2012.

After a succession of high-profile killings across the country since taking office in June 2013, the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has promised to recommence executions as it faces pressure to improve the law and order situation. There is no compelling evidence that the death penalty is a deterrent in capital crimes compared to other forms of punishment. The most comprehensive study carried out by the UN in 1988 and most recently updated in 2008 concluded that there is no proof that executions are a greater deterrent to crime than life imprisonment. Amnesty International's concern is heightened by the fact that in Pakistan many death sentences are handed down after trials that do not meet international fair trial standards. These trials are characterized by a lack of access to legal counsel and an acceptance of evidence inadmissible under international law. Statements extracted through torture continue to be used as evidence in court. Defendants often face restrictions in trying to access a lawyer or are given state-appointed lawyers who are often poorly trained and paid, and may not represent their clients vigorously unless given further payments by the defendant or their family. In addition, the right to fair trial has been undermined in trials before lower courts which continue to sentence people to death. These courts operate with restricted public access and with the requirement for trials to be completed within a matter of days or weeks, putting judges under extreme pressure to convict.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and under any circumstances, regardless of the nature of the crime, the characteristics of the offender, or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. The organisation considers the death penalty a violation of the right to life as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Names: Attaullah alias Qasim; Muhammad Azam alias Sharif; Jalal alias Abdul Jalil; Behram Khan; Shafqat Hussain; Muhammad Munir Hussain; Dr Zulfiqar Ali Khan; Mohammad Ameen.

Gender: M

Further information on UA: 224/13 Index: ASA 33/011/2013 Issue Date: 20 August 2013