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Pakistan/USA: People taken into US custody are at great risk

Amnesty International today condemned the imminent execution of Mir Aimal Kasi scheduled for 14 November in Virginia, USA. Kasi was abducted by US intelligence personnel from Pakistan with the collusion of the Pakistani government in 1997. He was sentenced to death for the murdering in 1993 two CIA agents.

"We oppose the death penalty for anyone, irrespective of the crime of which he is convicted and have appealed to the Governor of Virginia to commute Aimal Kasi's death sentence. The death penalty is the denial of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment", Amnesty said today.

In a new report *Pakistan: Imminent execution of Mir Aimal Kasi raises fears for others taken into US custody without human rights safeguards*(AI Index: ASA 33/034/2002) Amnesty International expressed fears that other transferred to US custody from Pakistan may be similarly tried and sentenced to death or in other way have their rights compromised.

"We urge the Government of Pakistan not to hand over anyone, including those suspected of 'terrorist' acts to any country where they may be at risk of serious human rights abuses including the death penalty", the organization said while releasing a new report,

Since Pakistan began supporting the US-led coalition against 'terrorism' hundreds of people have been arbitrarily arrested in Pakistan and handed over to US custody in circumvention of Pakistan's domestic laws, including those relating to arrest and detention and extradition.

"In the fight against 'terrorism', human rights protection is often relegated to second place", Amnesty International said, "but there can be no trade off between security and human rights, the two go hand in hand."

"We urge the Government of Pakistan to strictly adhere to its own laws and international laws and standards and refrain from treating those suspected of 'terrorism' as though they had no rights."

Background

Several hundred Pakistanis have so far been handed over to US custody in circumvention of Pakistan's extradition law and in violation of the international prohibition of extraditing anyone to a country where their rights may be abused.

In June 2002, Amnesty International documented the cases of Afghans, Pakistanis and people of Middle Eastern origin who had been arbitrarily transferred to US custody in its report *Pakistan: Transfer to US custody without human right safeguards* (ASA 33/014/2002). They included Abdul Salam Zaeef, the former ambassador to Pakistan who was arrested and handed over in January 2002; British-Pakistani dual national Moazzem Beg who was picked up in Islamabad and handed over to US custody in February 2002; Palestinian Abu Zubaydah and at least 21 others arrested in Faisalabad and Lahore in March 2002.

Since then, several other people were arrested and passed to US custody without reference to Pakistan's extradition law. They include Kenyan national Sheikh Ahmed Salim arrested in Karachi in July 2002 and Yemeni Ramzi bin al-Shaibah and several others arrested in September 2002.

Public Document

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