

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 34/01

Death penalty/Imminent execution

5 June 2001

SINGAPORE

Mohammed Ali Hashim, aged 53, Pakistani national
Mohammed Afzal Khan, aged 49, Pakistani national

Mohammed Ali Hashim and Mohammed Afzal Khan, who were sentenced to death on drug trafficking charges, are facing imminent execution. The Court of Appeal rejected Muhammad Afzal Khan's appeal on 21 May. On the recommendation of his lawyer Mohammed Ali Hashim has not appealed. The only hope now for both men is to petition the President, who has the power to grant clemency.

Mohammed Ali Hashim and Mohammed Afzal Khan were convicted of trafficking five kilograms of heroin, and sentenced to death by the Singapore High Court on 30 January 2001.

Mohammed Ali Hashim has apparently suffered from chronic depression since childhood, and has a low IQ. It is claimed that this has restricted his ability to understand complex ideas and the consequences of his own actions. His lawyer requested a psychological evaluation to confirm this, but it is not known whether this has taken place.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is mandatory in Singapore for drug trafficking, murder, treason and certain firearms offences. Anyone over the age of 18 found in possession of more than 15 grams of heroin, 30 grams of morphine or cocaine, or 500 grams of cannabis, is presumed to be trafficking in the drug, unless the contrary can be proved, and faces a mandatory death sentence. Persistent drug addicts who have been admitted more than twice to a drugs rehabilitation centre are treated as criminals who may be imprisoned for up to 13 years and caned. Despite these draconian anti-drugs laws, drug addiction continues to be a problem.

Singapore, with a population of just over three million, is believed to have one of the highest rates of executions per capita in the world. Recent government figures show that out of 340 people executed between 1991 and 2000, 247 had been convicted of drug trafficking. Executions are by hanging and take place on Friday mornings at dawn. Families of convicts are normally only informed of the impending execution one week beforehand. There is no public debate about the use of the death penalty in the country.

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 have shown that it is more likely to be imposed on those who are poorer, less educated and more vulnerable than average. The death penalty is irrevocable, yet the risk of error in applying it is inescapable. While Amnesty International recognizes the need to combat drug trafficking, there is no convincing evidence that the death penalty deters would-be traffickers more effectively than other punishments.

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

- urging the President to commute the death sentence passed on Mohammed Ali Hashim and Mohammed Afzal Khan
- expressing sympathy for the victims of crime, but pointing out that if the executions are carried out, it will only cause more suffering for Mohammed Ali Hashim's and Mohammed Afzal Khan's relatives;
- expressing your unconditional opposition to the death penalty as a violation of one of the most fundamental of human rights - the right to life;

- recognizing the need to combat drug trafficking, but emphasizing that there is no proof that the death penalty deters would-be traffickers more effectively than other punishments, and appealing to the authorities to find a more humane way to tackle this problem.

APPEALS TO:

The President
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Telegrams: **President S R Nathan, Singapore**
Faxes: **+ 65 738 4673**
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Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

The Prime Minister
The Honourable Goh Chok Tong
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Minister of Home Affairs
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and to diplomatic representatives of Singapore accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.