

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

COUNTRY:

SUBJECT TITLE: Taiwan - Executions reach record level

November 1990

AI INDEX: ASA 38/18/90
DISTR: SC/CO/GR

Sixty-nine people had been executed in Taiwan during 1990 as of 23 September, according to the China Post. This already exceeds the alarming number of executions recorded during the previous year (68), and continues the tendency towards increased use of the death penalty in Taiwan. Prior to 1989, about 20 executions took place each year in Taiwan. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty which it considers to be a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, upheld in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The organization has on many occasions called on the Government of Taiwan to end executions and to take steps towards abolition of the death penalty.

On 26 September 1990 the Judicial Yuan, the country's highest judicial body, issued a statement commenting on the 1990 Amnesty International Report. The Yuan argued that only about forty per cent of countries in the world had abolished the death penalty and that it had been shown that in most instances public opinion was not in favour of abolition. It concluded that discussion about abolition was consequently ". . . academic, impractical and unrealistic". The Judicial Yuan also pointed out that the death penalty is required to combat serious crime and that the courts impose death sentences carefully and only for very serious crimes such as murder, rape and kidnap.

Amnesty International is concerned about the increased use of the death penalty in Taiwan. Detailed studies of the use of the death penalty throughout the World have shown that it does not have the desired deterrent effect and this is borne out in Taiwan where the reported incidents of serious crime have continued to rise despite the increased use of the death penalty. Amnesty International also considers that retention of the death penalty should not be dependent upon public opinion which is often ill-informed about the arguments in favour abolition.

Executions Carried out in Late September and October 1990

On 6 October 1990 Tseng Fan-jui was executed at Taipei Prison. He had been convicted of five robberies and a murder carried out in 1988. His sentence had been upheld by the Supreme Court on 21 September 1990.

On 27 September Huang Tien-yuan was executed at Taipei Prison. He had been convicted of five rapes committed in late 1989 and his sentence had been upheld by the Supreme Court on 15 September 1990.

Sentences Upheld by the Supreme Court

On 19 October 1990 the Supreme Court upheld the death sentences imposed on Hwang Wen-kui and Lin Wen-kui. Both men have been convicted of rape and robbery carried out in 1989.

On 17 November 1990 the Supreme Court upheld the death sentence imposed on Twa Tsun-hsu who has been convicted of murdering his employer and his employer's wife.

On 17 November 1990 the Supreme Court also upheld the death sentence imposed on Wang Ming-chuan who has been convicted of kidnap and murder.

New Death Sentences

On 14 September 1990 Lu Kyan-min was sentenced to death by Kaohsiung District Court for the kidnap and murder of a local businessman.

On 21 September 1990 Kao Chih-nan was sentenced to death for drugs smuggling.

On 4 October 1990 Yang Shuang-ku was sentenced to death at Taitung District Court for murder and kidnap.

On 25 October 1990 Hu Shui-chin was sentenced to death by Panchiao District Court for the rape and robbery of three women.

On 22 November 1990 Huang Hung-yu (known as the "Black Ox") was sentenced to death by Changhua District Court for six murders.

On 27 October 1990 the death penalty was abolished as the maximum sentence for corrupt government officials. This was one of several revisions to the Statute for Punishment of Corruption and the amendment was made after several legislators argued that the death penalty was not necessarily the best deterrent against corruption. Amnesty International welcomes this move but remains concerned about proposed revisions to the Criminal Code which seek to impose the death penalty as the maximum penalty for hijacking.

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