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Taiwan confirms death sentence for 23-year-old case

Taiwan must halt the use of the death penalty, Amnesty International said today, after the death sentence was confirmed in the country's longest-running criminal case.

Chiou Ho-shun who has been detained for 23 years is now on death row facing execution following the rejection of his appeal by the Supreme Court on 28 July.

"The Taiwanese authorities must immediately halt the execution of Chiou Ho-shun, and order his retrial with fair proceedings in line with international standards," said Sam Zarifi Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific Director.

"Taiwan must also introduce a moratorium on all executions as a step towards abolishing this cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment outright."

After an official investigation in 1994 two public prosecutors and ten police officers handling the kidnapping of Lu Cheng were convicted of extracting confessions through torture.

In 2003, police also admitted they had covered up the fact that a man executed for other offences had confessed to the murder.

He was sentenced to death in 1989 in connection with two separate crimes that took place in 1987: the kidnapping of Lu Cheng and the murder of Ko Hung Yu-lan.

Chiou Ho-shun's case has bounced back and forth between the High Court and the Supreme Court for retrial 11 times.

Chiou's other 11 co-defendants received prison terms; all have since served their sentences and one died in prison.

More than 50 people are on death row in Taiwan. Five men were executed this year and four more executed on 30 April 2010. The last execution prior to this occurred in December 2005.

Since 2000, the government of Taiwan has repeatedly pledged to abolish the death penalty. The mandatory death penalty was abolished in 2006. The number of capital crimes has been reduced but executions have continued.

"Amnesty International questions Taiwan's stated intention to abolish the death penalty after recent executions and in light of this latest ruling," said Sam Zarifi.

"Taiwan should make good on its promises to end this abhorrent practice and follow the global trend toward abolition."

In 1977, when Amnesty International began its global campaign against the death penalty, it had been abolished by only 16 countries. Now, nearly a hundred countries have abolished it for all crimes, with 139 ending it in law or practice.