

ADPAN NEWSLETTER 3/11 May and June 2011

INTRODUCTION

This edition of the ADPAN Newsletter covers the months of May and June and provides links to death penalty news stories from across the Asia Pacific region, specifically on the following countries: **Afghanistan, Australia, China, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Taiwan**. It is divided into three sections:

- Good News
- Significant World News
- Regional Developments

The Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) is an independent, impartial network of individuals, NGOs, lawyers and activists committed to working for an end to the death penalty in their own countries and across the Asia Pacific region. For further information contact adpan@amnesty.org (<http://asiapacific.amnesty.org/apro/aproweb.nsf/pages/adpan>).

Please distribute the ADPAN Newsletter widely, place on websites, pass on to those who might be interested and use in any campaigning in support of work against the death penalty including activities such as Facebook, twitter and other online activity.

GOOD NEWS

MYANMAR

36 political prisoners released under presidential commutation

On 16 May, the Myanmar government announced it had reduced by one year the sentences of all prisoners and commuted all death sentences to life imprisonment. According to the National League for Democracy (NLD), 36 political prisoners have been released so far. Zaw Win, the director general of the Insein Prison Department, told reporters that another 14,600 prisoners will be released from 42 prisons across the country.

17/05/2011, Amnesty International

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/myanmar-prison-sentence-reductions-are-not-enough-2011-05-17>

18/05/2011, Mizzima

<http://www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/5282-36-political-prisoners-released-under-presidential-commutation.html>

SIGNIFICANT WORLD NEWS

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia lifts death penalty for over 20 former Derg officials

On 2 June, Ethiopian President Girma Woldegiorgis commuted the death sentences of over 23 senior officials from the Derg military regime which ruled the country from 1974 – 1987.

2/06/2011, Community of St Egidio

<http://www.sudantribune.com/Ethiopia-lifts-death-penalties-for.39087>

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

AFGHANISTAN

Afghan mass killers first to be hanged by Karzai government

On 20 June, according to a police report, Zar Ajam and Mateullah, were convicted of killing 40 people during a bank robbery in February and hanged inside a Kabul prison. These are said to be the first such sentences carried out by the government of President Hamid Karzai since the end of Taliban rule a decade ago. A small number have reportedly been executed by firing squads inside prisons, but these have not been publicly announced.

On 21 June, Amnesty International (AI) issued a statement condemning the executions. According to AI, no reported executions have been recorded in the past two years.

21/06/2011, Amnesty International – Statement ASA 11/003/2011

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA11/003/2011/en>

20/06/2011, Washington Post

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/afghan-mass-killers-first-to-be-hanged-by-karzai-government/2011/06/20/AGq8gwcH_story.html

CHINA

Former Chinese vice mayor gets death in graft case

On 12 May, Xu Maiyong, former vice-mayor of Hangzhou, was sentenced to death for bribes, embezzlement and abuse of power. The sentence appeared intended to demonstrate the Party's resolve in combating widespread corruption.

12/05/2011, Business Week, Bloomberg

<http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9N614401.htm>

Public irked over officials using get-out-of-jail cards

Xinhua reported that officials found guilty of crimes have their sentences reduced more frequently (70%) than others (20-30%). In Chinese Criminal Law, an official taking bribes of more than 100,000 yuan can be sentenced to death. In practice,

many officials are sentenced to death with a two year reprieve, a situation which is causing discontent among the public.

17/05/2011, *People Daily*

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/7381883.html>

China permits less death penalties

On 24 May, the Supreme People's Court issued its annual report stating its decision to cut the number of executions. A death sentence with a two year reprieve is being recommended for cases which courts consider do not merit immediate execution.

25/05/2011, *BBC News*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13539397>

25/05/2011, *People's Daily Online*

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90785/7390122.html>

26/05/2011, *English Xinhuanet*

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/video/2011-05/26/c_13895188.htm

INDIA

India president denies mercy plea of death row convicts

On 27 May, Devinder Pal Singh Bhullar, Punjab, and Mahendra Nath Das, Assam, have had their mercy petitions rejected by President Pratibha Patil. Bhullar was sentenced to death in 2001 for plotting terrorist attacks in Delhi which took place in 1993. Das was sentenced to death for murder.

On 3 June, **Lawyers for Human Rights International (LFHRI)** released a petition requesting Bhullar's sentence to be converted to life imprisonment. They stressed that he is a mentally ill person who has been admitted in mental hospital, and has already spent the last 16 years behind bars.

03/06/2011, *LFHRI*

<http://www.lfhri.org/index.php/activities/228-lfhri-filed-a-petition-before-the-president-of-india-for-review-of-decision-in-death-penalty-case>

27/05/2011, *BBC*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-13571576>

30/05/2011, *Asian Correspondent*

<http://asiancorrespondent.com/56205/in-india-death-penalty-debate-takes-a-political-dimension/>

16/06/2011, *Sikh Siyasat*

<http://www.sikhsiyasat.net/2011/06/16/amnesty-international-issues-worldwide-urgent-action-appeal-for-prof-bhullar/>

First time in Jharkhand, death sentence to four Maoists

On 23 June four Maoists were sentenced to death for killing 19 people in Jharkhand, including former chief minister Babulal Marandi's son.

23/06/2011, *Times of India*

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Chilkhari-killing-4-Maoists-sentenced-to-death/articleshow/8961546.cms>

INDONESIA/AUSTRALIA

Scott Rush escapes death penalty

In April 2005, a group of nine (The Bali Nine) attempted to smuggle over eight kilograms of heroin from the Indonesian island of Bali to Australia. Six people received death sentences. On 10 May 2011, the Indonesian Supreme Court upheld Scott Rush's appeal against the death sentence for drug offences.

10/05/2011, ABC

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/05/10/3213037.htm>

23/06/2011, International

http://www.international.to/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1301:uphill-battle-to-spare-australians-from-execution&catid=97:breaking-news&Itemid=108

MALAYSIA

Malaysia halts drug trial of Mexican brothers

On 28 June, three Mexican brothers, Luis Alfonso, Simon and Jose Regino, who have been sentenced to death for drug offences, have had their trial halted amid claims that the evidence was tampered with.

28/06/2011, Strait Times

http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/SEAsia/Story/STIStory_684866.html

PAKISTAN

Campaign against death sentence to juveniles

On 18 May, the National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN) and other organizations have urged the government to stop charging juvenile offenders with inhumane charges, including life imprisonment, corporal punishment and death penalty. Pakistan is a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention against Torture (CAT), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), but members of NJJN claim that child offenders in Pakistan receive inadequate protection as evidenced by a number of cases where child offenders have been sentenced to death.

18/05/2011, Pakistan Observer

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=92821>

18/05/2011, Hands off Cain

<http://www.handsoffcain.info/news/index.php?iddocumento=15306641>

SINGAPORE

Singapore rejects British author Alan Shadrake's appeal

On 27 May, Alan Shadrake, author of *Once a Jolly Hangman: Singapore Justice in the Dock* which challenges Singapore's death penalty laws, had his sentence upheld by the Appeals Court. ADPAN appealed for the release of the author, claiming that 'Peaceful criticism of government policies should never be the subject of criminal proceedings'.

27/05/2011, ADPAN

http://asiapacific.amnesty.org/apro/aproweb.nsf/pages/adpan_singaporestatement

27/05/2011, BBC News

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13570701>

27/06/2011, Strait Times

http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/Singapore/Story/STIStory_673258.html

27/06/2011, Bloomberg

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-05-27/u-k-author-loses-singapore-appeal.html>

TAIWAN

Taiwan defends executions of death-row inmates according to law

On 13 May, Vice Minister of Justice Che Shou-huang said the abolition of the death penalty is Taiwan's ultimate goal but can only be realised after it receives the support of the majority of local people. At present, according to numerous opinion polls, 80% of Taiwanese people support the death penalty. Until the law is changed, Chen says Taiwan 'must execute inmates in accordance with legal provisions and cannot violate any court ruling'.

13/05/2011, Focus Taiwan

http://focustaiwan.tw/ShowNews/WebNews_Detail.aspx?Type=aiPL&ID=201105130026