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Malaysia: End caning as a punishment for all offences

On the 20 July, the Shariah High Court in the Malaysian state of Pahang sentenced Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarno, 32, to six strokes of the cane and fined her RM5,000 (approximately US$ 1,400) after she pleaded guilty to consuming alcohol last year at a hotel there. The judge in the case had also threatened to jail her for three years if she did not pay the RM 5,000 fine, which she subsequently paid.

The Malaysian authorities should immediately revoke the sentence to cane her and abolish the practice of caning altogether. Caning is a form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and is prohibited under international human rights law.

The court has ordered that Kartika Sari Dewi Shukarno be remanded at the Kajang women's prison from Monday, 24 August, and caned within seven days of this date. According to reports, no one in the country, male or female, has so far been caned under the country's Shariah laws, making her the first to be punished in this way. Reports also say that she is the first woman to be caned in Malaysia.

Amnesty International called on the Malaysian government to stop caning people immediately and repeal all laws providing for caning and all other forms of corporal punishment. Currently caning is used as a supplementary punishment for at least 40 crimes in Malaysia.

In June 2009, the Malaysian government announced that they had sentenced 47,914 migrants to be caned for immigration offences since amendments to its Immigration Act came into force in 2002. At least 34,923 migrants have so far been caned between 2002 and 2008, according to the country's prison department records.

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