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## **Uganda: Executions to resume with hangings of 28 people**

A show of mercy by President Yoweri Museveni is now all that can save 28 people from death by hanging on 30 April, in what would be Uganda's first executions since 1996, Amnesty International said today.

The organisation is gravely concerned for the 28 men, and the implications a resumption of executions will have for the more than 1,000 prisoners currently on death row in Uganda. Unconfirmed reports have stated that some or all of the men have already been executed, but this has not been verified. Amnesty International is appealing to President Museveni not to sign more death warrants.

“With the fate of so many resting in his hands, President Museveni would demonstrate real leadership by commuting the sentences of those scheduled to die this Friday,” Amnesty International said. “Steering clear of killing people in response to crime and instability will also keep Uganda firmly in step with the worldwide trend towards abolishing the death penalty.”

“Some of Uganda's main aid donors -- Germany, the United Kingdom and other European Union members -- are strong advocates of death penalty abolition and therefore have an important role to play in trying to ensure that these executions are halted immediately.”

Twenty-six of those due to be hanged have been convicted of murder, the other two of aggravated robbery. One man, Haji Musa Ssebirumbi, was found guilty of murder in 1989 and lost his appeal in June 1992. He has been on death row since then. Details of the others' cases are not known, but it is believed that many of them were convicted of murder over 10 years ago. All are reportedly due to die at Luzira Prison in the capital, Kampala, at 7.30pm local time this Friday.

The Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy reportedly recommended confirmation of the prisoners' death sentences after the Supreme Court denied their appeals. This committee advises the Ugandan President on which death sentences he should commute or confirm. The President still has the option to override the committee, exercise executive clemency and spare the men's lives.

Ugandan non-governmental organizations, such as the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), have said that despite a high level of conflict and urban terrorism in Uganda at the moment, the executions will only serve to increase the level of violence in Uganda.

Amnesty International is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty because it violates the most fundamental human rights, like the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It also has never been shown to be a more effective crime deterrent than other punishments. The organization campaigns for countries around the world, including the United States of America, China and Saudi Arabia, to abolish the death penalty.

The organization is therefore appealing for a publicly announced moratorium on executions in Uganda and urging the authorities to consider abolishing capital punishment completely. It is also asking the Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy to commute all the death sentences it reviews.

Thirteen other prisoners are believed to have had their death sentences commuted to life imprisonment by the committee. It is not known whether it will review more cases in the near future, as their deliberations are confidential.

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**For more information or to arrange an interview, please call Amnesty International in Kampala, Uganda, on +256 41 222 951 or 286 232**

