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Barbados: Proposed executions could constitute murder

Four men are due to be executed in Barbados next week. If these executions take place they would be the first in that country since 1984.

Michael McDonald Huggins, 27, Frederick Benjamin Atkins, 31, Lennox Ricardo Boyce, 25, and Jeffrey Joseph, 27, are scheduled to be hanged next Tuesday 2 July. Death warrants were read to the four men on Wednesday 26 June, following the rejection of their petitions for clemency by the Mercy Committee.

Should they take place, the executions would flagrantly violate international and domestic law and thus constitute murder.

Legal appeals for all four men are yet to be completed. Lawyers acting for the men notified the government of their intention to file constitutional motions to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council -- currently Barbados' highest court of appeal -- in April 2002.

International law requires that the death penalty only be carried out after a *final* judgment rendered by a competent court and that the death penalty may not be carried out pending any form of appeal (Article 4(6) of the American Convention; Article 6(4) ICCPR; UN Death Penalty safeguards, paragraph 8). Officials must be instructed not to carry out an execution while any appeal or other recourse procedure is pending.

Barbados is a state party to both the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the American Convention on Human Rights (American Convention).

Huggins was convicted for the 1999 murder of 21-year-old Stephen Ricardo Wharton. Atkins was sentenced to hang in July 2000 for the October 1998 murder of 20-year-old Sharmaine Hurley. Boyce and Joseph were sentenced to death for the killing of 22-year-old Marquelle Hippolyte on April 15, 1999.

The last hangings in Barbados took place in 1984 when Noel Ricardo Jordan, Melvin Inniss and Errol Mopsie Farrell were hanged.

Public Document

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