

URGENT ACTION

AMNESTY LAW CHANGE MAY END CURRENT TRIAL

The Surinamese Parliament will shortly vote on an amendment to the country's 1992 amnesty law. If passed, it will halt a current trial into the killing of 15 people in December 1982, allegedly perpetrated by, amongst others, the current President Dési Bouterse.

Members of the Surinamese Parliament are currently debating a proposed amendment to the country's 1992 amnesty law. The proposed amendment will widen the current period of amnesty for past criminal offences linked to the defence of the state from 1985-1989 to April 1980 until August 1992. The new timeframe will now cover the extrajudicial executions of 15 opponents of the then ruling military regime, which took place on 8 December 1982. The current President of Suriname, Dési Bouterse, who was the country's military leader at the time, is currently on trial for the killings along with 24 others. If passed, the new amnesty law will bring the trial to an end, denying the families of victims their rights to justice, truth and reparation. It will also preclude any future investigations into complaints of crimes of international law and gross human rights violations committed between 1980 and 1992.

The amended text reportedly states that amnesty will be granted to those who "have committed criminal offences and/or are suspected of having done so within the framework of the defence of the State and/or overthrow of the lawful authorities such as the events occurring during December 1982 and the Guerrilla War", and will "promote national unity and the further uninterrupted development of the Republic of Suriname".

There is no scheduled date for a vote, but it may take place at any moment. Amnesty International believes that the amended law, if passed, shall contravene international law, which states that amnesties cannot be applied to those suspected of responsibility for gross human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, and also denies redress to the relatives of victims. On the contrary, Suriname, as any other state, is obliged to bring those responsible for crimes under international law to trial.

Please write immediately in Dutch or your own language:

- Urging members of Parliament not to pass the amendment, as amnesties cannot be applied to those responsible for crimes under international law and gross human rights violations including extrajudicial executions, and also denies redress to the relatives of victims.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 MAY 2012 TO:

Speaker of the Parliament

Jennifer Simons

Voorzitter

Onafhankelijkheidsplein 10

Paramaribo, Suriname

Fax: +597 477 554

Email: j.simons@dna.sr, voorzitter@dna.sr

Salutation: Madam Speaker

Deputy Speaker of the Parliament

Ruth Wijdenbosch

Vice-voorzitter

Onafhankelijkheidsplein 10

Paramaribo, Suriname

Fax: +597 477 554

Email: vicevoorzitter@dna.sr

Salutation: Madam Deputy Speaker

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dési Bouterse was elected president in 2010. He is accused of human rights violations committed during his two previous terms in power, between 1980 and 1991. They relate to the period when Dési Bouterse was Suriname's then army chief and government leader from 1980 to 1987, and again between 1990-1991. Together with over 20 co-defendants, he is standing trial for the extrajudicial executions of 15 opponents of the military regime on 8 December 1982 in Fort Zeelandia, the then military headquarters in the capital. Dési Bouterse first came to power in 1980, when he led a coup. He allowed the return of civilian rule in 1987 but launched a second coup in 1990 - taking power for a further year.

Legal proceedings against Dési Bouterse and 24 of his associates began in November 2007 but have faced repeated delays. Reports received by Amnesty International at the time indicated that the victims were shot after being tortured. Bouterse has denied charges that he presided over the killings but his account was contradicted by the sole survivor of the incident, trade unionist Fred Derby, who died in May 2001.

The ruling Mega Combination coalition party, which is headed by President Bouterse, introduced the legislation on 19 March 2012.

Name: N/A

Gender m/f: N/A

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