

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 36/004/2005

17 November 2005

Further Information on UA 279/05 (ASA 36/003/2005, 24 October 2005) - Imminent Execution

SINGAPORE

Van Tuong NGUYEN (m), aged 25, Australian national

Van Tuong Nguyen will be hanged on 2 December, according to a letter his family received on 17 November from the government of Singapore. Executions are usually carried out at dawn.

The President had rejected an appeal for clemency on 21 October.

Van Tuong Nguyen was arrested at Singapore's Changi airport in transit from Cambodia to Australia in December 2002, after police found a package of heroin strapped to his back and a second package in his backpack.

Van Tuong Nguyen was sentenced to death for importing 396.2 grams of heroin into Singapore. He was convicted under the Misuse of Drugs Act, which carries a mandatory death sentence for anyone found guilty of trafficking in more than 15 grams of heroin.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Singapore, with a population of just over four million, is believed to have the highest per capita execution rate in the world. More than 420 people have been executed since 1991, the majority for drug trafficking. The Singapore government has consistently maintained that the death penalty is not a human rights issue. The Misuse of Drugs Act provides for a mandatory death sentence for at least 20 different offences and contains a series of presumptions which shift the burden of proof from the prosecution to the defence. Prisoners facing execution may be granted clemency by the President, but this is extremely rare.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to commute the death sentence imposed on Van Tuong Nguyen, who is scheduled to hang on 2 December;
- urging them to impose a moratorium on executions, with a view to complete abolition, in line with the April 2005 UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) resolution on the question of the death penalty;
- noting that the UNCHR has urged states which still maintain the death penalty not to impose it as a mandatory sentence, or for crimes without lethal or extremely grave consequences.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

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Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Law

Prof. S. Jayakumar

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Salutation: Dear Minister

Attorney General

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COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Singapore accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 December 2005.