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## **Afghanistan: 14 prisoners executed in two days**

The Afghan government today confirmed it had executed six prisoners on death row, in addition to the eight prisoners already executed on 20 November 2012.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai had approved the executions on 20 November. This marks the first use of the death penalty in Afghanistan since June 2011.

“It is extremely regrettable that President Karzai has decided to go ahead with these 16 executions. There's news also of more to come. We oppose the death penalty under any circumstance; it is the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment.”

“This rush to execute so many prompts the question - why now? In recent years, the Afghan government had avoided executions. Karzai is certainly under some pressure now to demonstrate he can maintain the rule of law in Afghanistan, and advance reconciliation talks with the Taleban. Could these executions be more about political gain than justice?”

“The death penalty is deplorable under any circumstance, and even more troubling given the seriously flawed Afghan justice system. Detainees are frequently tortured into confessions then relied upon by a judiciary that has little to no independence. Meanwhile serious human rights violations go unpunished. There is simply no guarantee of a fair trial.”