

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: ASA 11/014/2007 (Public)
News Service No: 193
9 October 2007

Amnesty International dismayed by execution of 15 in Afghanistan

Amnesty International condemned the executions of 15 people on Sunday 7 October 2007 in Afghanistan. The 15 men were executed by firing squad at the Pul-i Charkhi high security prison outside Kabul. They had been charged with a variety of offences including rape, murder, attacking security posts, robbery and looting.

Amnesty International particularly regrets these executions at a time when there is a real global momentum towards the abolition of the death penalty. A total of 133 countries from all regions of the world have abolished the death penalty in law or practice and there is an overall decline in the number of reported executions. On 10 October, World Day against the Death Penalty, people around the globe will be protesting against the use of the death penalty, and later this month the UN General Assembly will be voting on a resolution calling on all governments to support a global moratorium on executions.

These executions mark an end to a three year moratorium on executions in Afghanistan, and come shortly after the Taliban executed a 15 year old in southern Afghanistan.

Amnesty International considers the death penalty as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. As the world continues to turn away from the use of the death penalty, the execution of these 15 men is an anomaly. Such state sanctioned killing is all the more unacceptable where, as in this case, there are serious doubts about the fairness of trials.

The last execution in Afghanistan was that of Abdullah Shah in April 2004. At the time of his trial in October 2002 the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, following her observance of his trial proceedings, stated there were concerns "that the safeguards and restrictions according to international standards for imposing capital punishment cannot be observed at this stage." In 2003, the UN Commission on Human Rights called on the Afghan government to "declare a moratorium on the death penalty in the light of procedural and substantive flaws in the Afghan judicial system."

The death penalty is often discriminatory in its application, used disproportionately against the poor, minorities and members of racial, ethnic and religious communities. It is often imposed after unfair trials, the risk of executing the innocent has been persistently demonstrated, and executions have never been proved to have any unique deterrent effect against crime. Amnesty International believes that executions are brutalizing, dehumanising those that carry it out and devaluing the worth that society places upon human life.

Amnesty International again calls on the Afghan government to immediately impose an official moratorium on the use of the death penalty.