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MEDIA ADVISORY

**Open letter from Amnesty International to Sri Lanka's President
on fears that executions will resume after 23 years**

In an open letter to Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, Amnesty International's Secretary General Pierre Sané today expressed deep concern that the country may be moving towards resuming executions, after 23 years of being a de facto abolitionist country. In its letter, which follows the recent announcement that death sentences will no longer be automatically commuted when they come before the President, the human rights organization

states that a resumption of executions would be a blight on Sri Lanka's reputation and seriously undermine international confidence in the government's commitment to human rights and reform

urges that the policy change announced on 13 March 1999, as part of a larger review of the President's prerogative of granting remissions of sentences imposed by the courts, be reconsidered

urges the government of Sri Lanka to consider appointing a commission to study the apparent recent rise in crime in the country and make recommendations for effective measures which could be taken without resort to the death penalty

! points out that there is no proof that the death penalty has any special power to deter people from resorting to violent crimes

! highlights the international trend towards abolition of the death penalty, including resolutions at recent United Nations human rights commissions.

To receive a copy of the letter in full, or to arrange an interview, please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 (0) 171 413 5566.