

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 35/03/96

EXTRA 20/96

Death Penalty

9 February 1996

GUYANA

Ayube Kahn
Rockliffe Ross

Two more death warrants have been signed in Guyana: Ayube Kahn and Rockliffe Ross are scheduled to be executed on the morning of 12 February 1996.

Ayube Kahn was sentenced to death in 1991 for the murder in 1990 of a schoolboy while trying to steal his bicycle. His appeal to the Court of Appeal was rejected in September 1994. Rockliffe Ross was charged in 1989 and convicted of murder in 1992. He was reportedly unrepresented by a lawyer at a preliminary hearing.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty is mandatory for murder in Guyana. Nineteen people are currently believed to be on death row. There have been no executions in Guyana since 1990 when seven executions were carried out. At the beginning of the year the Government of Guyana announced that hangings would resume after a six-year break.

On 1 February 1996, the death warrants for the execution of Abdool Saleem Yasseen and Noel Thomas were read (see EXTRA 16/96, AMR 35/01/96, 6 February). The two men's attorney sought an emergency hearing on 3 February, which led to a seven-day reprieve. A further appeal for Thomas and Yasseen is now underway at the High Court, to which Amnesty International has sent an observer. Points to be raised in this appeal include the conditions on death row and the psychiatric state of those on death row. An appeal to the Human Rights Committee in Geneva on behalf of Thomas and Yasseen is also being considered.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams and faxes in English or in your own language:

- expressing sympathy for the victims of violent crime;
- urging that the death sentences on Ayube Khan and Rockliffe Ross be commuted and that no further death warrants be signed;
- urging that, at the very least, no executions should be carried out pending the outcome of the constitutional appeal currently underway on behalf of Thomas and Yasseen, which may have implications for others on death row;
- welcoming the fact that no executions have been carried out in Guyana since 1990, and stressing that the resumption of executions would be a retrograde step in the protection of human rights for all Guyana's citizens and would be contrary to international standards and trends towards abolition;
- making some or all of the following general points about the death penalty: the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishment; it has a brutalizing effect upon all those who are involved in the process; execution is irrevocable and,

despite the most stringent judicial safeguards, can be inflicted on the innocent.

APPEALS TO:

H.E. Dr Cheddi D. Jagan
Executive President
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New Garden Street
Georgetown, Guyana

Telegrams: Executive President, Georgetown, Guyana

Faxes: +592 2 69969 (if this number does not work, send faxes via the
Head of the Presidential Secretariat at: 592 2
63395, marked for the attention of: H.E. Dr Cheddi
D. Jagan, Executive President)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Bernard De Santos
Attorney General and
Minister of Legal Affairs
Carmichael Street
Georgetown, Guyana

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Salutation: The Honourable Bernard De Santos

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Lama Avenue, Bel Air Park
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The Stabroek News
46-47 Robb Street
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Georgetown, Guyana

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and to diplomatic representatives of Guyana accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.