

PUBLIC

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27 March 2007

Further Information on UA 57/07 (ASA 13/002/2007, 7 March 2007)–Death penalty/imminent execution

BANGLADESH **Shayek Abdur Rahman (m)**
 Siddikul Islam alias Bangla Bhai (m)
 Four other men

The six men listed above have had their mercy petitions rejected by the president. There is nothing to prevent their execution other than a last-minute intervention by the President. There is media speculation that they could be executed in the next few weeks but in fact they could be executed at any time.

They were sentenced to death in May 2006 for involvement in a bomb attack which killed two judges. All their appeals have been rejected. The President rejected a petition for clemency on 4 March, but does still have the power to stop the executions and commute their sentences.

The six are members of the banned Islamist group Jamiat-ul-Mojahedin Bangladesh (JMB). The authorities have accused the JMB of involvement in a series of bomb blasts and other attacks that have taken place since at least 2003. The targets included members of the judiciary, journalists, civil society activists and places of popular entertainment including cinemas.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prisoners sentenced to death in Bangladesh have an automatic appeal hearing before the High Court. If this fails they can lodge further appeals with the High Court. They can then appeal to the Supreme Court, and after that they have the right to appeal to the President for clemency. Executions are carried out after all these appeals have been exhausted.

In 2005, at least 217 men and one woman were sentenced to death, and at least three men were executed by hanging.

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 or degrading treatment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The death penalty is an inherently unjust and arbitrary punishment, however heinous the crime for which it is imposed. Studies globally have shown that it is more likely to be imposed on those who are poorer, less educated and from marginalized segments of society. The death penalty is irrevocable, yet the risk of error in its application is inescapable. Amnesty International recognizes the need to combat violent crime, but the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments.

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

- saying that Amnesty International recognizes the gravity of the offences of which Shayek Abdur Rahman, Siddikul Islam Bangla Bhai and the four other men have been convicted, but opposes the death penalty in all cases, as it violates the most fundamental right of every human being, the right to life;
- urging the president to commute the men's death sentences;

- urging the president to call for a moratorium on executions, with a view to abolition of the death penalty, in line with the April 2005 UN Commission on Human Rights resolution on the question of the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

President Iajuddin Ahmed
President Office
Bangabhaban,
Dhaka
Bangladesh

Fax: +8802 9566593

Salutation: Dear President Iajuddin Ahmed

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 May 2007.