

4 January 2002

**Further information on EXTRA 34/01 (ASA 36/003/2001, 5 June 2001) - Death penalty/Imminent execution**

**SINGAPORE**                    **Mohammed Ali Hashim (m), aged 53, Pakistani national**  
**Mohammed Afzal Khan (m), aged 49, Pakistani national**

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Mohammed Ali Hashim is due to be executed on 11 January 2002, following the rejection of his appeal for clemency by the President of Singapore.

Mohammed Ali Hashim was sentenced to death in January 2001 after being convicted of trafficking five kilograms of heroin. According to information received by Amnesty International, he has suffered from chronic depression since childhood and has a low IQ. Prior to his arrest he had been receiving treatment for mental illness from a medical centre in Karachi and had been prescribed anti-psychotic drugs which are believed to have inhibited his ability to act and think rationally.

Amnesty International does not know whether an alleged accomplice, Mohammed Afzal Khan, is also facing execution on the same day. He was also sentenced to death in January 2001.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The death penalty is mandatory in Singapore for drug trafficking, murder, treason and certain firearms offences. Anyone over the age of 18 found in possession of more than 15 grams of heroin, 30 grams of morphine or cocaine, or 500 grams of cannabis, is presumed to be trafficking in the drug, unless the contrary can be proved, and faces a mandatory death sentence. Persistent drug addicts who have been admitted more than twice to a drugs rehabilitation centre are treated as criminals who may be imprisoned for up to 13 years and caned. Despite these draconian anti-drugs laws, drug addiction continues to be a problem.

Singapore, with a population of just over three million, is believed to have one of the highest rates of executions per capita in the world. Recent government figures show that out of 340 people executed between 1991 and 2000, 247 had been convicted of drug trafficking. Executions are by hanging and take place on Friday mornings at dawn. Families of convicts are normally only informed of the impending execution one week beforehand. There is virtually no public debate about the use of the death penalty in the country.

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 inflicted. Studies have shown that it is more likely to be imposed on those who are poorer, less educated and more vulnerable than average. The death penalty is irrevocable, yet the risk of error in applying it is inescapable. While Amnesty International recognizes the need to combat drug trafficking, there is no convincing evidence that the death penalty deters would-be traffickers more effectively than other punishments.

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

- urging the President to reconsider his decision in the case of Mohammed Ali Hashim and appealing to him to commute the death sentence;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of crime, but pointing out that if the execution is carried out, it will only cause more suffering for Mohammed Ali Hashim's relatives;
- expressing your unconditional opposition to the death penalty as a violation of one of the most fundamental of human rights - the right to life;
- recognizing the need to combat drug trafficking, but emphasizing that there is no proof that the death penalty deters would-be traffickers more effectively than other punishments, and appealing to the authorities to find a more humane way to tackle this problem.

**APPEALS TO:**

The President

His Excellency S R Nathan

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**Telegrams: President S R Nathan, Singapore**

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**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

The Prime Minister

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and to diplomatic representatives of Singapore accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**