

EXTRA 43/98

Death Penalty

1 July 1998

SINGAPORELim Chin Chong, aged 19

Amnesty International fears that Lim Chin Chong may be at risk of imminent execution. The 19-year-old Malaysian was sentenced to death for murdering a 65-year-old man. In April 1998 the Court of Appeal upheld his death sentence, dismissing Lim Chin Chong's claim that he committed the murder whilst suffering from a mental disorder caused by a sexual advance from the man. His final recourse is to petition the President of Singapore for clemency. Clemency has only reportedly ever been granted in five cases.

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 provided. Studies have shown that it is more likely to be imposed on those who are poorer, less educated and more vulnerable than average. The risk of error in applying the death penalty is inescapable, yet it is irrevocable. Furthermore, there is no convincing evidence that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than other punishments.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent years there has been a sharp increase in the number of executions carried out in Singapore. Since 1994 Amnesty International has recorded more than 170 executions in the city-state which has a population of only three million. Most of the executions are believed to have been for drug-trafficking. There are fears that the true number of executions may be significantly higher as the Singapore authorities do not publish statistics on the use of the death penalty. Execution is by hanging.

The death penalty is mandatory for drug-trafficking, murder, treason and certain firearms offences. It is not known how many prisoners are currently under sentence of death.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- urging the authorities to commute the death sentence passed on Lim Chin Chong;
- expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty as a violation of one of the most fundamental of human rights - the right to life;
- expressing deep concern at the high rate of executions in Singapore and calling for all pending death sentences to be commuted;
- recognizing the need to combat murder and drug abuse, but emphasizing that there is no proof that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than other punishments and appealing to the authorities to find a more humane way of tackling these crimes.

APPEALS TO:The President

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Salutation: Your Excellency

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and to diplomatic representatives of Singapore accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.