

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 69/02

Fear of imminent execution

6 September 2002

KINGDOM OF THAILAND

At least 30 people on death row

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After the execution of 44-year-old Somkliang Soyplai on 3 September, Amnesty International fears that at least 30 others whose death sentences have been confirmed in Thailand are now in imminent danger of execution.

Somkliang Soyplai was sentenced to death for the rape and murder of his 10-year-old daughter. According to press reports, he initially confessed to the charges but withdrew his statement in court.

In January the Director General of the Corrections Department, Siwa Sangmanee, stated that between 20 and 30 people would be executed this year.

According to available information, the Thai prison service now has more people on death row than at any point in its history. More than 400 people under sentence of death, over 180 of whom were convicted of drug offences, are awaiting the outcome of their appeals.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Thai authorities resumed executions in 1995, after an eight-year moratorium. In the last six years, 39 prisoners have been executed. At least fourteen have been executed under the current administration, which came to power in January 2001. Five of these were executed at two hours' notice, with no opportunity to contact their relatives. The preparations for their executions were televised, reportedly on the orders of the Prime Minister. Large numbers of people convicted of drug crimes were sentenced to death in 2001; at one point more than 33 convicted traffickers were sentenced to death in a single week.

There are credible reports of police ill-treating and torturing suspects in pre-trial detention to extract confessions. Confessions are regularly used as evidence in capital trials, and defendants have maintained in court that police forced them to confess.

Executions in Thailand are carried out using a machine-gun. Prisoners stand with their hands tied to a pole, and are shot from behind a curtain. Preparations are underway to introduce lethal injection to replace shooting by 2003.

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

- expressing concern that at least 30 people sentenced to death face imminent execution, and that others in the final appeals stage may also be at risk;
- expressing your sympathy for the victims of rape and murder and recognizing the need to take measures against serious crime, but pointing out that the death penalty has never been shown to have a unique deterrent effect and is a violation of the right to life;
- expressing grave concern at the execution on 2 September of Somkliang Soyplai;
- urging the authorities not to carry out these executions and to establish

an immediate moratorium on executions, with a view to abolition, in line with recommendations by the United Nations Commission for Human Rights.

**APPEALS TO:**

*(Please note that fax machines may be switched off outside office hours - seven hours ahead of GMT)*

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Government House  
Pitsanuloke Road, Dusit  
Bangkok 10300  
Thailand

**Telegrams:** Prime Minister, Bangkok, Thailand  
**Faxes:** + 66 2 280 1443 / 282 2792  
**Salutation:** Dear Prime Minister

Purachai Piemsomboon  
Minister of Interior  
Ministry of Interior  
Thanon Atsadang  
Bangkok 10200  
Thailand

**Telegrams:** Interior Minister, Bangkok, Thailand  
**Faxes:** + 66 2 223 8851  
**Salutation:** Dear Minister

Siva Sangmanee  
Director General  
Corrections Department  
Nonthaburee Road 1  
Nonthaburee  
Bangkok 11000  
Thailand

**Faxes:** + 66 2 967 3335  
**Salutation:** Dear Director General

**COPIES TO:**

Chaturon Chaisaeng  
Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice  
Thanon Ratchadaphisek  
Chatuchak  
Bangkok 10900  
Thailand

**Faxes:** + 66 2 541 2314 / 513 2982

Saneh Chamarik  
Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission  
422 Phayathai Road  
Srapathum Royal Palace  
Pathumvan District road  
Bangkok 10330  
Thailand

**Faxes:** + 66 2 219 2964

and to diplomatic representatives of Thailand accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**