

Barbados: Letter to editor

The Editor
Barbados Nation
Nation House
Fontabelle
St Michael
BARBADOS

29 November 2000

Dear Editor,

I write with reference to your editorial of 23 November 2000, *Optimism Grows For New Court*. Contrary to comments made in your editorial, Amnesty International does not oppose the creation of the final court of appeal for the Caribbean. It seems to us that if the court will be free from political interference and will abide by international human rights standards, then we can only welcome such a court.

What concerns us are the comments made by the region's political leaders which refer to the court and the use of the death penalty. Over the last few years, these leaders have explicitly expressed their desire for a final court of appeal in order to hasten the implementation of the death penalty. Amnesty International has merely responded with concern over the existence of such a link. In 1998, for example, the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago said: "We are not asking that the Privy Council be removed completely as this country's final court, but just in murder cases."

As a world-wide independent movement consisting of over a million members, the "obligation" of Amnesty International that you refer to is to urge all governments to uphold the human rights of their citizens in law and in practice, in accordance with internationally agreed standards. The governments of the Caribbean region also have an obligation: to ensure the full protection of the rights of their citizens. We have, therefore, continually reminded these governments of their obligation to ensure that the rights of those under sentence of death are fully safeguarded, at all stages of trial and appeal.

Yours sincerely,

Pierre Sané
Secretary General of Amnesty International

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