

PUBLIC

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Imminent Execution

20 September 2004

BARBADOS

**Lennox Ricardo Boyce (m), aged 28
Jeffrey Joseph (m), aged 29**

Lennox Boyce and Jeffrey Joseph, who had their death warrants read to them on 15 September, are believed to be at imminent risk of execution. If the sentences are carried out they would be the first people to be put to death in Barbados in 20 years.

The two men were sentenced to death for the April 1999 murder of Marquelle Hippolyte, a 22-year-old woman. They were previously scheduled to be executed in June 2002 but the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, the highest court of appeal for Barbados, stayed their executions pending further appeals (see *EXTRA 48/02, AMR 15/001/2002, 28 June 2002*).

On 4 September 2004 the two men filed appeals against their sentences to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, as they are entitled to do under the American Convention on Human Rights. The rescheduling of their execution followed shortly after this, however, prompting fears that the Barbados authorities are preparing to flout international law by executing people on whose cases appeals are still to be heard.

Lennox Boyce and Jeffrey Joseph were initially told that their executions were scheduled to be carried out on the morning of 21 September. Their executions were stayed by the Barbados Court of Appeal, who will now hear their cases between 29 September and 5 October.

Amnesty International fears that, should the Court of Appeal and other higher courts deny the legal appeals, the government of Barbados will again issue execution warrants, and may carry out the death sentences before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has examined their appeals. This would violate Barbados's obligations under international law.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and as the ultimate form of cruel and inhuman punishment. It brutalizes those involved in the process of executions and wider society as a whole.

While executions have become increasingly rare in the English speaking Caribbean, support for the death penalty remains high. The region suffers from a high, and often increasing, crime rate and executions are seen as a method of crime control.

The government of Barbados has argued that it is required to carry out death sentences as a means of crime prevention, and in recent years has undertaken initiatives to resume the implementation of executions. For example, in September 2002, the government passed the Constitutional (Amendment) Act 2002, which prevented condemned prisoners from challenging their death sentences on a number of grounds (see *EXTRA 73/02, AMR 15/006/2002, 13 September 2002*).

The last executions to take place in Barbados were in 1984, when Noel Jordan, Melvin Inniss and Errol Farrell were hanged. Any resumption of execution in Barbados would run counter to the international trend of a move away from using the death penalty. In 2003, only 28 countries carried out executions. 117 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice and in the past decade an average of three countries a year have abolished the death penalty for ordinary crimes.

For more information on the death penalty in the English speaking Caribbean, please see '*State killing in the English-speaking Caribbean: a legacy of colonial times*' (AI index AMR 05/003/2002, April 2002).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive immediately, in English or your own language:

- expressing sympathy for the victims of violent crime and their relatives;
- expressing deep concern at the intention to resume the use of the death penalty in Barbados after 20 years without executions and calling on officials not to take such a retrograde step;
- expressing deep concern that Lennox Ricardo Boyce and Jeffrey Joseph were scheduled to be executed on 21 September 2004 and that an execution date may again be scheduled;
- expressing concern that Barbados has issued death warrants despite Joseph and Boyce having appealed to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and stating that this action places Barbados in violation of its obligations under international law;
- emphasizing that the death penalty has not been shown to be any more of a deterrent to violent crime than any other forms of punishment.

APPEALS TO:

The Rt. Hon. Owen Arthur
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Government Headquarters
Bay Street
St Michael, Barbados

Fax: (+1) 246 436 9280
E-mail: foreign@barbadosgov.org
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

The Hon. Mia A. Motley
Attorney General and Minister for Home Affairs
Frank Wolcott Building
Cilloden Rd
St Michael, Barbados

Fax: (+1) 246 437 3794
Email: attygen@caribsurf.com
Salutation: Dear Attorney General

The Hon. Billie A. Miller
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign
Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
1 Culloden Road
St Michael, Barbados

Fax: (+1) 246 429 6652
E-mail: foreign@caribnet.net
Salutation: Dear Deputy Prime Minister

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.