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GUYANA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS THIS WEEK'S HANGING DESPITE APPEALS FROM HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Amnesty International strongly condemned this week's execution of Rockliffe Ross which went ahead despite appeals to the Guyana Government from the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Centre in Geneva, requesting them not to carry out the execution while his case was being examined by the Human Rights Committee.

"It is outrageous that this execution could go ahead while Ross's case was being examined by the Human Rights Committee," Amnesty International said today. "Guyana has seriously undermined its reputation in the area of human rights protection -- both in the region and internationally."

Amnesty International is calling on the Government of Guyana to respect its obligations under international law with regard to other cases pending before the Human Rights Committee.

The organization also reiterated its concern that the resumption of hangings in Guyana was a retrograde step incompatible with human rights standards which encourage governments to restrict their use of the death penalty with a view to its abolition.

"Far from acting as a deterrent to crime, the death penalty may foster a climate of violence and vengeance as well as detract from more effective measures to combat crime," Amnesty International said

"Threats of violence made against lawyers and human rights workers in Guyana and other Caribbean countries who oppose capital punishment illustrate the brutalising effect this form of punishment has on society."

Rockliffe Ross was sentenced to death for the 1989 murder of a teenage boy during a robbery. Before his execution, Ross had submitted an application to the Human Rights Committee, alleging that his rights under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights had been violated -- a procedure allowed under the Optional Protocol to the Covenant which Guyana acceded to in 1993.

This was the second execution to be carried out since Guyana resumed hangings after a five year gap earlier this year. Some 20 other prisoners remain on death row.
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