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26 June, UN Anti-Drugs Day: Death sentences on the rise in Asia Pacific

On UN Anti-Drugs Day, there is growing concern that more people are sentenced to death for drug offences than any other crime in a number of Asia Pacific countries.

The Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN), of which Amnesty International (AI) is a member, says 16 Asia Pacific countries continue to apply the death penalty for drug trafficking and possession. This is at a time when there is a worldwide trend towards abolishing capital punishment.

There is no convincing evidence that the death penalty deters would-be drug offenders more effectively than other punishments. In China, police data shows the number of drug users went up 35 per cent in the five years since 2000. In Viet Nam, despite its use of the death penalty, the quantity of drugs seized by customs rocketed by 400 per cent year-on-year, according to an official speaking in 2005.

Yet the use of the death penalty against drug offenders is reported to be on the rise, particularly in South East Asia. In seven Asian countries - Brunei, India, Laos, Malaysia, North Korea, Singapore and Thailand – a mandatory death sentence is applied for certain drug offences. Moreover, countries including Malaysia, China and Singapore fail to apply the presumption of innocence for the crime of drug trafficking. These are violations of international legal standards.

In China, UN Anti-Drugs Day has been used by the authorities as an occasion for mass executions in recent years. Between 13 and 26 June 2006, AI recorded 55 executions for drugs offences.

Studies show that the death penalty often affects the poorest, most vulnerable members of society. In many cases, people have become involved in drug trafficking out of desperation or ignorance. Executing these people not only fails to deter others, but also fails to deal with the issues that drive them to offend.

ADPAN urges Asia Pacific countries to follow the lead of the Philippines and Nepal and join the global trend towards total abolition of the death penalty. They should start by ending the use of the death penalty for drugs offences - and finding alternative ways to break the cycle of drug abuse and crime.

The sixteen Asia Pacific countries that still apply the death penalty for drug-related crimes are:

Bangladesh, Brunei, China, India, Indonesia, Korea (North) , Korea (South) , Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Country reports

[China*](#)

[Indonesia](#)

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*You can also send appeals on behalf of these countries.

For further information, see:

[Asia Pacific: Death sentences for drug-related crimes rise in region](#) (public statement)

ADPAN

Caption: Public Health Ministry officials collect bags of methamphetamine to be burned during narcotic destruction ceremony, Ayutthaya, Thailand.