

MID MARCH-APRIL 16 DEATH PENALTY SUMMARY

Date format day/month/year

International Update (from 12.3.16 – 14.4.16)

AI have issued their Report on the Death Penalty for 2015.

‘The most executions in a single year for a quarter of a century. More countries executing their citizens. An increase of more than 50% from 2014’.

‘At least 1,634 executions took place (these figures do not include China). Countries carrying out the highest number of executions were China, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the US. At least 977 took place in Iran (+34% from 2014) – mainly for drug related offences. Iran is one of the few remaining countries imposing death sentences on child offenders. At least 320 were executed in Pakistan – the highest number ever. In Saudi Arabia there was a sharp increase (158 – a 76% increase on 2014). Many countries conducted grossly unfair trials’.

‘On the other hand, four countries abolished the death penalty for all crimes. This is the highest number of countries to fully abolish the death penalty in one year for almost a decade.’

- **Saudi Arabia**

- 13.3.16 – Reports in the Press indicated that 4 prisoners were due to be executed, with fears they included Ali al-Nimr, Dawood al-Marhoon and Abdullah al-Zaher, aged between 16 and 17 at the time of their arrests, for participation in anti-government demonstrations. Reprieve has written to David Cameron urging him to intervene.
- Excerpt from the blog of Nassra al Ahmed, mother of Ali al-Nimr – *‘I plea to all people of humanity to appeal to the officials to release my son. He should be free to live the life he aspires for as a young man full of ambition and the desire to give. At the least, they should give him a retrial that is public and fair and in accordance with international standards. It should be based on evidence rather than trumped up charges.’*
- 13.3.16 - Hadian Al Qahtani, convicted of murder, was executed
- 25.3.16 – Saudi citizen Abdullah al-Harbi, convicted of murder, was executed. He was the 76th person to be executed this year

- **Cameroon** – 17.3.16 – 89 members of the Nigerian Islamist militant group, Boko Haram, have been sentenced to death. These are the first death sentences to be imposed since the introduction of the Anti-Terror Law in 2014. Following the death sentences, a local human rights group has called

for reforms to Cameroon's justice system. The 89 are among 850 people arrested in the country on charges of links to Boko Haram.

- **USA**

- *Virginia* –

- Ricky Javon Gray, convicted of the murders of his two children, was due to be executed on 16th March but his execution was stayed while the Supreme Court decides whether to hear his case. The Court may decide 'he was not provided a full and fair opportunity to present the facts of his case'.
 - 11.4.16 – Governor Terry McAuliffe did not support the re-introduction of the use of the electric chair but refocused the bill on the use of lethal injection drugs.

- *Florida* – Mark James Assay was due to be executed on 17th March but his execution was stayed. He and his attorney argued that he had previously lacked representation, and the recent US Supreme Court ruling in respect of *Hurst v Florida* had called into question the constitutionality of the State's post death sentencing procedures.

- *Texas*

- Adam Ward, convicted of killing an enforcement officer, was executed on 22nd March. The US Supreme Court had rejected an appeal arguing his mental illness should have disqualified him from the death penalty. He was the fifth to be executed in Texas in 2016, the State which carries out the greatest number of executions.
 - The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles turned down the clemency appeal of John Battaglia, who was due to die on 30th March; however, he received a last minute reprieve to enable his attorney to pursue claims that he should be spared because of mental health problems. Battaglia had been convicted of the killing of his two daughters.
 - The case of Duane Buck – sentenced to death in 1997 for shooting his ex-girlfriend and a friend in front of their children – is attracting considerable attention in the media. His attorneys do not dispute his conviction but argue that racial considerations affected his sentencing, infringing his constitutional right to an impartial jury. Death sentences can only be imposed in the State if the prisoner can be shown to present a future danger to society. During the hearing, a Psychologist testified that black people pose a greater risk of 'future dangerousness' than white people. The Court will decide whether to take up the case on 22nd April.

- **Malaysia** – 25.3.16 – Despite the fact that the country is actively discussing the abolition of the mandatory death penalty, three men who had been convicted of murder were hanged – Gunasegar Pichaymuthu and two brothers, Ramesh and Sasivarnam Jayakumar.
- **Japan** – 25.3.16 - Yasutoshi Kamata (male) and Junko Yoshida (female), both convicted of murder, were hanged. 16 people have now been executed since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe came to power in 2012.
- **UK**
 - 5.4.16 – The Foreign Affairs Select Committee have criticised Philip Hammond and other Tory Ministers for generating ‘a perception that their work on human rights has become less important (*see elsewhere on this blog for the full story*)
 - 5.4.16 – The Shadow Foreign Secretary, Hilary Benn, stated ‘Tory Ministers need to realise that Britain’s standing in the world is diminished if we fail to speak out against the death penalty and abuses of the rule of law’.
 - 6.4.16 – AI criticised the Government for putting profits before people by failing to take action against the rising number of executions being carried out by our international allies, ‘preferring to prioritise trade with countries like China, Saudi Arabia or Pakistan’.
 - 6.4.16 – Baroness Anelay responded to the Report by AI and criticism of the Foreign Office – ‘The UK opposes the death penalty in all circumstances and we make our opposition well known at the highest levels to countries which continue to apply it. Our message to them is clear, the death penalty is unjust, outdated and ineffective. It also risks fuelling extremism.’
- **Iran**
 - 9.4.16 - Rashid Kouhi was executed. A student, he was arrested in 2011 when crystal meth was found in his bag. Following a grossly unfair trial, he was sentenced to death in 2012. He was denied his right to appeal, and his parents were summoned for a final meeting with their son the day before his execution.
 - 13.4.16 – A scathing UN Report on Human Rights in Iran, published in March 2016, highlighted the ‘alarmingly high rates of executions in the country, including juveniles’. Iran has the highest rate of juvenile executions in the world, despite being a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that forbids capital punishment for anyone under 18. In the past decade, Iran has executed at least 73 juvenile offenders. Comments have been made on social media by ‘ordinary’ Iranians criticising President Rouhani for not doing more to stop juvenile executions.

- **Pakistan –**

- 9.4.12 – Two brothers, Nasir Mehmood and Tahir Iqbal, were hanged. They were said to have killed six members of a family over a land dispute. Pakistan now occupies the third highest place for recorded state executions.
- 14.4.16 – Four prisoners, all convicted of murder, were hanged – Anwarul Haq, Shulam Farooq, Muhammad Ifan and Mir Bahir. Hangings had initially been reinstated for acts of terrorism but were later extended to all capital offences.

Urgent Actions

- **Iran –**

- UA 72/16 – Himan Uraminejad was sentenced to death at the age of 17, following his conviction for murder. Now aged 21, he has been told he will be executed following the end of the holiday period on April 1st. His trial was unfair and there are allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. (*Circulated to DPLWG on receipt on 31.3.16*)
- UA 39/16 – Amanj Veisee – see last month's Group Urgent Action – we continue to receive requests to write to the Iranian authorities.

- **Bangladesh –** UA 66/16 – Motiur Rahman Nizami, leader of the political party Jamaat-e-Islami, is at imminent risk of execution following the Supreme Court's decision to uphold his death sentence. Should his appeal be rejected, he could be executed in less than two weeks. (*Circulated to DPLWG 31.3.16*)

- **USA –**

- *Virginia* – Ivan Teleguz, a Ukrainian national, was scheduled to be executed on 13th April. He maintains his innocence. Two of the witnesses have recanted their trial testimony, and the threat of the death penalty was used to secure the co-operation of a third, whose blood matched that found at the apartment. (*Circulated to DPLWG 31.3.16*). *Ivan Teleguz was granted a stay of execution on 4.4.16 as the State had been unable to obtain a supply of lethal injection drugs.*
- *Georgia* – Kenneth Fultz, an African American, was due to be executed on 12th April. He was sentenced to death for murder, despite the claims made of inadequate legal sentencing, intellectual and mental health issues and a signed sworn statement from a juror that he had voted for the death penalty because 'that's what the n***** deserved.' (*Circulated to DPLWG 1.4.16*). *Kenneth Fultz was executed on 12.4.16.*

- **Japan –** UA received from AI Australia. Kho Jabing was due to be executed for murder last November. There were serious doubts surrounding the evidence, and the Judges were divided. He is now facing execution again,

and appeals to save his life are to be sent to the President, Tony Tan Keng Yam. (*Circulated to DPLWG 11.4.16*).

- **Belarus** - UA 265/15 – The death sentence of Ivan Kulesh, convicted of murder, has been upheld by the Supreme Court of Belarus. His only hope now is to appeal for clemency to the President, but this is likely to be rejected. (*Circulated to DPLWG 12.4.16*)

Campaigning

- An email was sent to Farshid Talaghani at AI on 21st March to raise the possibility of a nationally organised Monthly Action in respect of the death sentences imposed in Iran on those who were juveniles at the time of their arrest. Farshid has responded that he will pass this suggestion on to the Communications Group for their agenda.
- World Day Against the Death Penalty – 10th October 2016 – Farshid has advised that the October Local Group Monthly Action will include an action related to the Death Penalty. This could possibly form the focus of our Group event.
- There is no further news regarding Reggie Clemons. We continue to monitor the situation.
- This month's Death Penalty letter writing action for the Group will be on behalf of Himan Uraminejad, sentenced to death in Iran at the age of 17 – UA 72/16. *Please write immediately. The execution was due to take place at the end of the Easter holiday but there has been no further news.*

14 April 2016