

# URGENT ACTION

## MORE AT RISK AS THAILAND RESUMES EXECUTIONS

Thai prison authorities carried out the country's first execution in nearly a decade on 18 June 2018. Amnesty International fears that others on death row may be at imminent risk after receiving unconfirmed reports that prisoners have in recent weeks had their applications for a royal pardon rejected.

**Theerasak Longji**, 26 years old, was executed by lethal injection at Bang Kwang Central Prison between 3 and 6pm on 18 June 2018. While the execution was announced to the public later on 18 June by the Director General of the Department of Corrections of Thailand, Theerasak Longji's family told a national media outlet that they had not been notified in advance of the scheduled execution and were not given the chance of a last visit with their relative. Theerasak Longji was only allowed one phone call with his wife shortly before the execution was carried out. He was convicted of and sentenced to death for the murder of a 17 year old boy in July 2012.

Amnesty International has received information, which it has not yet been able to independently verify, suggesting that several other prisoners have had their applications for royal pardon rejected and therefore may be at imminent risk of execution. Figures provided to the organization by the Ministry of Justice in March 2018 indicated that 193 out of 510 death-row prisoners had their sentences finalized, including 108 convicted of murder and 85 of drug-related offences.

The resumption of executions in Thailand sets the country against the global trend towards abolition of the death penalty and represents a major setback for the country's human rights record. The Thai authorities committed to abolish the death penalty in the Third National Human Rights Action plan, due to be implemented by the end of 2018. They also accepted recommendations made at the country's UN Universal Periodic Review in May 2016 to review the imposition of the death penalty for offences related to drug trafficking, commute death sentences and take steps towards abolishing the death penalty.

### 1) TAKE ACTION

**Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:**

- Expressing your deep concern at the execution of Theerasak Longji on 19 June and the lack of notice to his family, and urging the Thai authorities to halt any plans to carry out further executions;
- Asking them to commute all existing death sentences and establish an immediate moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty;
- Expressing regret at the setback that the resumption of executions represents for Thailand's human rights record and highlighting that two-thirds of the world's countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice

**Contact these two officials by 2 August, 2018:**

Prime Minister of Thailand  
Prayut Chan-o-cha  
Government House, Pissanulok Road,  
Dusit, Bangkok 10300  
Fax: +66 2 288 4323  
Email: [spmwebsite@thai.gov.th](mailto:spmwebsite@thai.gov.th)  
**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Ambassador Virachai Plasai,  
Royal Embassy of Thailand  
1024 Wisconsin Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
Phone: 202 944 3600 | Fax: 1 202 944 3611  
Contact form: <http://thaiembdc.org/contact/>  
Twitter: @ThaiEmbDC  
**Salutation: Dear Ambassador**

### 2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 119.18*

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**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The execution of Theerasak Longji was the first to be carried out in Thailand since 2009, and the seventh since the method of execution was changed from firing squad to lethal injection in 2003. The resumption of executions set Thailand against its own recent achievements on the death penalty. Thailand was close to mark ten years without executions, a development that could have allowed Amnesty International to reclassify the country from retentionist to abolitionist in practice as early as 2019. This would have followed from the abolition of the mandatory death penalty for the offence of selling prohibited substances in 2017; and the piloting of the full implementation of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), the adoption of which Thailand was instrumental in securing internationally.

The death penalty in Thailand is applied as the discretionary or mandatory punishment for several offences, including drug-related offences, corruption and bribery which do not meet the threshold of the “most serious crimes” to which the use of the death penalty must be restricted, in countries that have not yet abolished it, under Article 6(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Thailand became a state party to this treaty in 1996. The imposition of the mandatory death penalty is also prohibited under international law. The UN Human Rights Committee has stated that “the automatic and mandatory imposition of the death penalty constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of life [...] in circumstances where the death penalty is imposed without any possibility of taking into account the defendant’s personal circumstances or the circumstances of the particular offence”.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and under any circumstances as a violation of the right to life, recognized by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights; and as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. It is an irrevocable punishment, imposed and administered through justice systems that can be vulnerable to discrimination and error. The organization is further concerned by the statements by Thai authorities released after the execution indicating that the death penalty is an effective mean to protect people from crime. There is no conclusive evidence that the death penalty has a unique deterrent effect. Statistics from countries that have abolished the death penalty show that the absence of the death penalty has not resulted in an increase in the crimes previously subject to capital punishment. Among other studies, a comparison of murder rates in Hong Kong and Singapore, both of which have a similar size of population, for a 35-year period beginning in 1973 shows that the abolition of the death penalty in the former and the high execution rate in the latter in the mid-1990s had little impact on murder levels. Studies also show that punitive policies have little influence on the prevalence of drug use.

As of today, 106 countries have abolished the death penalty in law for all crimes and 142 countries (more than two-thirds) have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. In 2017, two more countries – Guinea and Mongolia – abolished the death penalty in law for all crimes and Guatemala became abolitionist for ordinary crimes only. The global figures of executions and death sentences recorded by Amnesty International in 2017 report a decrease by 39% and 17%, respectively, on the record-high peaks recorded in 2015 and 2016. Executions were reported in an isolated minority of countries (23), only 11, or 6%, of which were “persistent” executioners, meaning that they carried out executions every year in the past five years. Excluding China, 84% of all recorded executions were reported in only 4 countries: Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Name: prisoners under sentence of death  
Gender m/f: both

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