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Halt imminent execution after Supreme Court upholds death sentence

Bangladesh

The Bangladeshi authorities should halt the imminent execution of Motiur Rahman Nizami and impose a moratorium on the death penalty, Amnesty International said after the country's Supreme Court rejected his final appeal today. Motiur Rahman Nizami, the current chief of Bangladeshi political party Jamaat-e-Islami, was sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in Bangladesh in October 2014. He was convicted of murder, rape and the mass killing of intellectuals during Bangladesh's War of Independence in 1971.

“We are dismayed that the Supreme Court has upheld the conviction and death sentence against Motiur Rahman Nizami. The victims of the horrific events of the 1971 Liberation War deserve justice, but the death penalty is not the answer,” said Jameen Kaur, Amnesty International's Campaigns Director for South Asia. “Taking another life will just perpetuate the cycle of violence. We urge the Bangladeshi authorities to halt this execution immediately, and impose a moratorium on the implementation of the death penalty with a view to its eventual repeal.” The government has a duty to ensure accountability for war crimes, and it is positive that the Bangladeshi authorities are taking steps in this direction. But many credible organizations including Amnesty International and the UN have raised serious and important issues around the fairness of the ICT trials which have not been addressed. “Victims of past atrocities deserve better than a flawed process. Today's decision has already triggered demonstrations across Bangladesh, and all sides must ensure that these do not turn violent. Security forces should ensure that the right to peaceful protest is respected, while political leaders on all sides should call on their supporters to refrain from human rights abuses,” said Jameen Kaur. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature of the crime, the characteristics of the offender, or the method used by the state to kill the prisoner.

BACKGROUND

At least 197 people were sentenced to death in Bangladesh in 2015, including four people sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT). Bangladesh carried out four executions in 2015, three of whom were sentenced by the ICT. The ICT is a Bangladeshi court set up by the Government in 2010 to investigate mass scale human rights violations committed during the Bangladeshi 1971 Independence War. Amnesty International welcomed the Government's move to bring those responsible to justice, but insisted that the accused should receive fair trials without recourse to the death penalty. The proceedings of the Tribunal in previous cases were marked with severe irregularities and violations of the right to a fair trial.