Statement on the Execution of two Filipinos in China for Drug Trafficking

4 December 2023

The Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) and the Coalition Against the Death Penalty (CADP) express our grief over the execution of two Filipinos in China on charges of drug trafficking.

We join the bereaved families to offer condolences to family members executed and are grateful for the Philippine Government’s efforts to exhaust appeals for commuting the punishment. In due time and without identifying the identities of the two individuals, it is important to stress the lessons that can inform our work to end capital punishment and foster transparency.

We urge the governments of both China and the Philippines to be more transparent in providing information about the status of persons on death row, the charges they are facing, and the conditions they are in. Every opportunity should be given for the prisoners or their loved ones to seek legal counsel, or for lawyers to step forward to aid families who are often overwhelmed and at a loss, or do not have enough resources to engage adequate legal representation. Timely information about persons on death row is also crucial in harnessing support to call for reprieves, commutations of stays of execution. Any refusal or impediment to such measures severely undermines the fairness and legitimacy of a state’s criminal justice system.

Public information can also be used to educate and mobilise members of the public to work towards more effective solutions to address problems in our societies. Cases that are shrouded in secrecy, away from public scrutiny, do not offer opportunities for us to better understand how people end up getting involved with drugs or drug-related offences in the first place. If our collective goal is to prevent crime and work towards improved well-being in our communities, unaccountable and secret executions will do little to help us achieve our desired ends.

We also urge the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to work more effectively to emphasise their own pronouncements, particularly the one stressing that "international drug control conventions... cannot be used to justify the use of the death penalty for drug-related offenses alone... It may also impede international cooperation to fight drug trafficking... But the use of the death penalty cannot provide durable solutions or protect people". We urge the UNODC to strengthen human rights-based approaches to drug control and urge member States to uphold their obligations under international human rights law.
We note that the death penalty for drug offences does not meet the international law criterion of 'most serious crime' threshold for the use of the death penalty. In any event, ADPAN urges States to take steps to limit its scope and use so they can ultimately join the majority of the global community in abolishing the death penalty in all its forms.

For more information:

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ADPAN is the peak regional body for organisations committed to the abolition of the death penalty across Asia-Pacific, with members from 20 countries within the region. As such, ADPAN maintains that the death penalty violates the right to life, that it is the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and that the death penalty should be entirely abolished internationally.