

URGENT ACTION

CHINESE VETERAN ACTIVIST EXECUTED

Xu Youchen, 58, was executed on 15 November 2018 after the China Supreme People's Court approved his death sentence the month before.

Veteran activist **Xu Youchen** was first sentenced to death in December 2016 after being convicted for intentional homicide. The Sanmenxia City Intermediate People's Court in the central province of Henan found him guilty of killing a policeman when authorities were taking him and his wife away for peacefully petitioning in 2014. In December 2017, the Henan Provincial Higher People's Court rejected Xu's appeal and upheld his conviction and death sentence. After a review, the Supreme People's Court approved the death sentence on 8 October 2018.

China is the world's top executioner. Based on ongoing monitoring of developments in China's criminal justice system, Amnesty International believes that China continues to execute thousands annually. In 2009 Amnesty International stopped publishing its estimated figures on executions in China, as data on the use of the death penalty is classified as a state secret.

Amendments to the Criminal Law in 2015 reduced the number of crimes punishable by death from 55 to 46. State media indicated that, although the nine crimes were rarely used and would have little impact in reducing the number of executions, their deletion was in line with the government's policy of "kill fewer, kill more cautiously". However, the revised provisions still failed to bring the Criminal Law in line with requirements under international law and standards on the use of the death penalty, which require its use to be restricted to "the most serious crimes" only.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty unconditionally, in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime, the guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual, or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. The organization has long held that the death penalty violates the right to life, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

This is the third update of UA: 3/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/7865/2018/en/>

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