



News Service 77/95

EXTERNAL - FOR INFORMATION AND RESPONSE ONLY

AI INDEX: EUR 41/01/95  
24 APRIL 1995

SPAIN: DEATH PENALTY LIKELY TO BE ABOLISHED

On Tuesday 25th April, the Spanish Congress will discuss a bill that would abolish the death penalty in Spain, where it can still be applied under the Military Penal Code. Should the proposal be passed, Spain would become the 55th country to abolish the death penalty for all offenses. Italy, Switzerland and Greece have adopted similar legislation recently.

The approval of the law would represent a great achievement for Amnesty International, and particularly for the Spanish Section, who have been conducting a nationwide campaign for the past two years in order to abolish this last remnant of what the organization considers to be a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

The Spanish Section has worked intensively to increase its Death Penalty Network, and has lobbied the autonomous parliaments of the different Spanish Communities to approve official statements in favour of total abolition. They have also approached political parties in the Spanish National Parliament to encourage them to pass a bill that would abolish the death penalty completely. All indications are that the bill to be discussed on Tuesday will be approved.

The Autonomous Parliaments of La Rioja, Asturias and the Basque Country were the first ones to pass proposals fully to abolish the death penalty. Both the Asturian and Basque Parliaments have since responded to urgent action appeals in cases of imminent executions all over the world. Amnesty Groups in other regions have continually urged their autonomous and regional parliaments to follow suit. Extremadura, Islas Baleares, Madrid, Navarra, Catalonia, Andalucía and Castilla-León eventually added their names to the list of parliaments which have approved proposals to abolish the death penalty completely.

Apart from the great significance that this event holds for the Spanish Section and the movement as a whole, it also represents a significant step towards an expression of a general wish among European nations to secure the total abolition of the death penalty.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ, United Kingdom

Tel: (44) (71) 413 5500 Telegrams: Amnesty London WC1 Telex: 28502 AMNSTY G FAX: (44) (71) 956 1157

E-mail: (GreenNet) amnestyis@gn.apc.org, (GeoNet) amnesty-is@mcr1.geonet.de

As from 16 April 1995: Tel: (44) (171) 413 5500 Fax: (44) (171) 956 1157

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The death penalty was used continuously in Spain until 1932, when it was abolished in a reform of the Penal Code under the Second Republic. It was restored in October 1934 for certain terrorist crimes. In 1938 it was fully restored by General Franco and was generally used until the 1978 Constitution abolished the death penalty except as an optional penalty for certain crimes defined under the Military Penal Code (in force since June 1986) for times of war.

The last executions carried out in Spain were those of Salvador Puig Antich and Heinz Chez, on 2 March 1974, by garrote vil, a traditional tourniquet-like instrument for administering capital punishment in Spain, and on 17 September 1975 of Angel Otaegui Echeverría, Jose Luis Sánchez-Bravo Sollas, Juan Paredes Manot, Jose Humberto Baena Alonso and Ramón García Sanz, members of the opposition groups of ETA and FRAP, who were executed by firing squad.

ENDS\