

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ACT 50/010/2003 (Public)  
News Service No: 232

**Embargo Date: 10 October 2003 00:01 GMT**

## **World Day Against the Death Penalty: Amnesty International Calls For Mobilization**

Published

Amnesty International calls on communities around the world to participate in the World Day against the Death Penalty, scheduled to take place today.

"Death is not justice. The death penalty violates the very foundation of human value and dignity. It is outrageous that states still carry out executions. No research has shown that it deters criminality more effectively than other punishments -- instead it fuels a culture of violence, is often applied in a discriminatory manner and has no place in a modern society respecting human rights values," said Irene Khan, Amnesty International Secretary General.

"The organization is urging people in all countries to sign the on line petition calling on governments to cease executions immediately.

Around the world today activists will mobilize through manifestations, debates and seminars to increase the pressure on governments to abolish the death penalty, and to create awareness about this cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

"The world is moving ever closer to getting rid of the death penalty, but much remains to be done," Amnesty International continued.

"Seventy-six countries have now abolished the death penalty for all crimes, and 16 for all but exceptional crimes. A further 20 countries are abolitionist in practice - they no longer carry out executions."

The latest country to join the list was Armenia, which in September ratified Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights, an international treaty which abolishes the death penalty in peacetime.

"Despite the clear trend towards abolition, sadly some countries continue to execute prisoners," Amnesty International said. "People are still being legally executed by the state, by lethal injection, hanging, firing squad and even by stoning."

During 2003 to date, 57 people have been executed in the USA. There have been at least 83 executions in Iran and 40 in Saudi Arabia. In 2002 Amnesty International recorded 1,526 executions in 31 countries, 1,060 of which were in China [1].

In the report "*West Africa: Time has come to abolish death penalty*", published today, Amnesty International describes the situation in 16 West African countries regarding the death penalty. Three of the 16 countries have abolished the death penalty; only four have carried out executions in the past 10 years. Debates in the region and initiatives for criminal law reform are also described in the report.

"It's a good sign that many of the countries in this region haven't carried out any execution in the last 10 years. Now it is time for them all to take the full step and abolish the death both in law and in practice," Amnesty International emphasized.

The World Day against the Death Penalty is being organized by the World Coalition against the Death Penalty, an organization of trade unions, bar associations, local and regional governments and human rights organizations working for the universal abolition of capital punishment. Amnesty International is a member.

## **BACKGROUND**

Still 83 countries refuse to follow the world trend - including the US, Japan, China, Nigeria, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan. Some of these countries even use the death penalty against people who were under 18 years old when he or she committed the crime.

In April this year, Scott Hain was executed in the state of Oklahoma, USA, for a crime he committed when he was only 17 years old.

As of September Christopher Padua, Ronald Bragas, Elmer Butal, Ramon Nicodemus, Saturani Panggayong and Roger Pagsibigan -- all of them imprisoned for crimes they committed when they were under 18 -- are waiting for their execution in cell 215 in a prison in the Philippines.

In May this year 15 year old Al-Taher Ahmad Hamdan was sentenced to death in Sudan.

Amnesty International also expresses concerns about the death penalty in Viet Nam where there has been a dramatic increase in executions during 2003. According to official statistics 80 people have been sentenced to death this year.

In China, which in past years has executed more people than any other country, the government has introduced so-called mobile execution vans, in an effort to improve cost-efficiency.

During 2002 Amnesty International recorded that 3,248 people were sentenced to death in 67 countries, and 1,526 men and women were executed in 31 countries. 1,060 executions in China and 113 executions in Iran, but the true number was believed to be much higher in both countries. Seventy-one people were executed in the USA.

**For information on activities planned for the World Day, visit the World Coalition website:**

<http://www.worldcoalition.org/bcoaljm00.html>

or visit Amnesty International's Death Penalty website:

<http://www.amnesty.org/pages/deathpenalty-index-eng>

<http://www.web.amnesty.org/mavp/av.nsf/pages/wdpc>

**Latest reports:**

Link to the full report: Viet Nam: The death penalty -- inhuman and ineffective  
<http://www.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA410262003?open&of=ENG-VNM>

Link to the full report: "West Africa: Time has come to abolish death penalty"

Link to the full report Philippines: Children under Sentence of Death - breach of domestic and international law  
<http://www.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA350152003?open&of=ENG-PHL>

*Footnote [1]: Statistics on the death penalty remain a state secret in China. All figures are a small fraction of the real total.*

#### Public Document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566  
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>