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## **Death Penalty in 2010: Executing countries left isolated after decade of progress**

Countries which continue to use the death penalty are being left increasingly isolated following a decade of progress towards abolition, Amnesty International has said today in its new report *Death Sentences and Executions in 2010*.

A total of 31 countries abolished the death penalty in law or in practice during the last 10 years but China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the USA and Yemen remain amongst the most frequent executioners, some in direct contradiction of international human rights law.

The total number of executions officially recorded by Amnesty International in 2010 went down from at least 714 people in 2009 to at least 527 in 2010. China is believed to have executed thousands in 2010 but continues to maintain its secrecy over its use of the death penalty.

“The minority of states that continue to systematically use the death penalty were responsible for thousands of executions in 2010, defying the global anti-death penalty trend,” said Salil Shetty, Amnesty International’s Secretary General.

“While executions may be on the decline, a number of countries continue to pass death sentences for drug-related offences, economic crimes, sexual relations between consenting adults and blasphemy, violating international human rights law forbidding the use of the death penalty except for the most serious crimes,” said Salil Shetty.

Two regions are responsible for most executions worldwide: Asia and the Middle East.

China used the death penalty in 2010 against thousands of people for a wide range of crimes that include non-violent offences and after proceedings that did not meet international fair trial standards.

A significant proportion of the executions or death sentences recorded in 2010 in China, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, Libya, Malaysia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Yemen were for drug-related offences.

Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates ignored international prohibitions in 2010 and imposed death sentences on individuals that were below 18 years of age when the crimes were committed.

Amnesty International’s report highlights a number of set backs during 2010 when six other countries and territories carried out executions after a hiatus and one country expanded the scope of the death penalty.

“In spite of some set backs, developments in 2010 brought us closer to global abolition. The President of Mongolia announced a moratorium on the death penalty, an important first step as capital punishment is

still classified as state secret. For the third time and with more support than ever before, the UN General Assembly called for a global moratorium on executions” said Salil Shetty.

Since 2003, less than half of retentionist countries have carried out executions. Less than a third were known to have executed prisoners every year over the last four years.

“Any country that continues to execute is flying in the face of the fact that both human rights law and UN human rights bodies consistently hold that abolition should be the objective.”

“A world free of the death penalty is not only possible, it is inevitable,” said Salil Shetty. “The question is how long will it take?”

## REGIONAL SUMMARIES

### Americas

- In the USA, the only country in the Americas to carry out executions, at least 110 death sentences were imposed during 2010 but this represents only about a third of the number handed down in the mid-1990s. And in March 2011, Illinois became the 16th state to abolish the death penalty.

### Asia-Pacific

- In 2010 Amnesty International was not able to confirm comprehensive figures on the use of the death penalty for China, Malaysia, North Korea, Singapore and Viet Nam although executions were known to have been carried out in all these countries. Available information from five other countries in the region confirmed at least 82 executions were carried out in Asia.

- Eleven countries imposed death sentences but continued not to carry out executions in 2010: Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, India, Indonesia, Laos, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

- The Pacific Islands remained free from death sentences and executions.

- In January 2010 the President of Mongolia announced a moratorium on executions with a view to abolition of the death penalty.

### Europe and Central Asia

- After a year’s hiatus in 2009 when for the first time no executions were recorded in Europe and the former Soviet Union, in March 2010 the Belarusian authorities carried out two executions. Three new death sentences were imposed in Belarus in 2010.

### Middle East and North Africa

- Fewer death sentences and executions were recorded in total in the Middle East and North Africa in 2010 than in 2009. However, where the death penalty was imposed it was frequently used after unfair trials and for offences, such as drug-trafficking or adultery, which are not recognized as the “most serious crimes” and therefore in violation of international law.

- The authorities of Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco/Western Sahara, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates imposed death sentences but continued to refrain from carrying out executions.

- The Iranian authorities acknowledged the execution of 252 people, including five women and one juvenile offender in 2010. Amnesty International received credible reports of more than 300 other executions which were not officially acknowledged, mostly in Vakilabad Prison, Mashhad. Most were of people convicted of alleged drugs offences. Fourteen people were publicly executed. Death sentences continued to be imposed in large numbers.

### Sub-Saharan Africa

- In 2010 one more African country, Gabon, abolished the death penalty, bringing the number of abolitionist countries among African Union members to 16.

- Four countries were known to have executed in sub-Saharan Africa in 2010: Botswana (1), Equatorial Guinea (4), Somalia (at least 8) and Sudan (at least 6).