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Stop the Death Penalty: The World Decides

On this year's World Day against the Death Penalty - 10 October, Amnesty International is calling on the world's governments to vote for the UN resolution on a global moratorium on executions, which will be introduced at the current session of the UN General Assembly.

"There is a real momentum towards abolition of the death penalty," said Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International. "A total of 133 UN member states, from all regions in the world, have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice. Only 25 countries carried out executions in 2006, 91 percent of them in just six countries: China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and the USA. Those that chose this most cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment are increasingly in the minority."

"Governments must endorse the UN General Assembly resolution on a global moratorium on executions and take an important step to create a world without executions."

Recorded executions worldwide fell by more than 25 percent in 2006, with a drop from at least 2,148 in 2005 to at least 1,591 in 25 countries in 2006. At least 3,861 people were sentenced to death in 55 countries in 2006.

Europe is a death penalty-free zone, with the exception of Belarus. In Central Asia, there is a clear move towards abolition. Recently, Kyrgyzstan abolished the death penalty for ordinary crimes in June 2007, Kazakhstan has had a moratorium on executions since 2003 and Tajikistan has had moratoria on executions and death sentences since 2004. Uzbekistan is also taking steps towards abolition.

In Africa only six countries carried out executions in 2006. In March 2007, the Ghana Minister of the Interior, Albert Kan Dapaah, announced the commutation of 36 death sentences to life imprisonment. In April 2007 the High Court in Malawi declared the mandatory death penalty unconstitutional. In Nigeria in May 2007, the authorities announced that they would grant amnesty to all prisoners over 60 years old who had spent 10 years or more under sentence of death. In July 2007 Rwanda abolished the death penalty for all crimes. Burundi, Gabon and Mali are taking steps towards abolition.

The USA stands alone as the only state in the Americas to have carried out any executions since 2003. The US itself is slowly turning against the death penalty. The 53 executions carried out in 2006 represented the lowest annual total for a decade, and death sentences continue to drop from its peak in the mid-1990s.

In Asia, the Philippines abolished the death penalty in 2006. There has been some progress on reducing the death penalty in China. On 1 January 2007 the Supreme People's Court formally resumed its role of reviewing the sentences passed in China. It is expected that this review, according to Chinese legal scholars, would probably result in a 20 - 30 percent reduction in the total number of executions in China.

In Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia there is increasing debate about the abolition of the death penalty. In Morocco, a Truth Commission that concluded its work in 2005 has specifically recommended abolition of the death penalty.

Background

The World Day is organized by the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP) a coalition of over 64 organizations, including Amnesty International, bar associations, trade unions and local and regional authorities which

have joined together in an effort to rid the world of the death penalty. As part of the World Day, Amnesty International is joining together with thousands of others around the world who oppose the death penalty and support a global moratorium as a step towards abolition of the death penalty. Amnesty International is supporting the World Coalition against the Death Penalty's global petition, based on the 2000 UN petition launched by Community Saint Egidio in collaboration with Amnesty International. For more information:
<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/deathpenalty-index-eng>.

Public Document

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