

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Statement by Irene Khan, Amnesty International Secretary General, on the occasion of the World Day against the Death Penalty

10 October 2003

The abolition of the death penalty is one of Amnesty International's main objectives. We have tirelessly campaigned worldwide for abolition of this cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment over the decades.

Amnesty International is a member of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty and welcomes the initiative in calling for a World Day against the Death Penalty on 10 October. The World Day against the Death Penalty is an opportunity to rally global opposition against this ultimate punishment.

Today over 110 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Nevertheless, last year Amnesty International documented 1,526 executions in 31 countries of the world. These figures speak for themselves and show what remains to be done. We want to see the number drop to zero in future years.

The events planned for 10 October should help to convince the public in different countries of the cruelty and futility of the death penalty. Campaigning for abolition is something that everyone can and should be doing.

I call on people in all parts of the world to join in the World Day and sign the Appeal to the Authorities of All Countries that Still Retain the Death Penalty. I hope that those authorities will heed the appeal and bring to an end this ultimate violation of human rights.

Irene Khan
Secretary General
Amnesty International