

END THE DEATH PENALTY

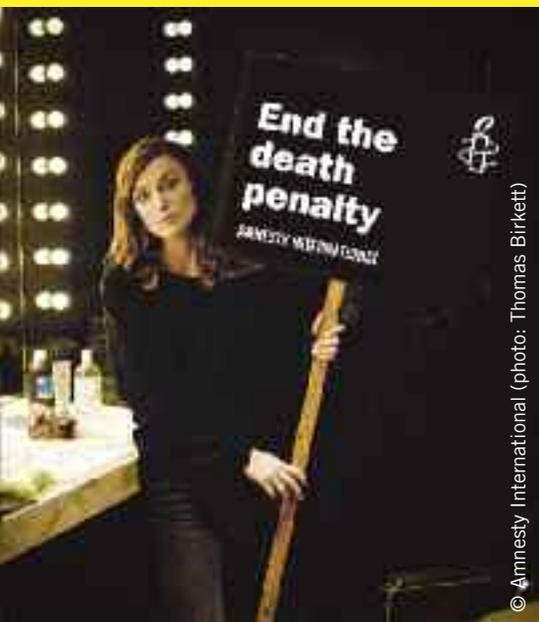
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



WORLD DAY
Against the Death Penalty
10 October 2011



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50 YEARS CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY



When Amnesty International was founded in 1961, only nine countries had abolished the death penalty for all crimes, and capital punishment was barely considered a human rights issue. Fifty years on, the trend towards worldwide abolition of the death penalty is unmistakable.

In 2010 one more country, Gabon, abolished the death penalty, bringing the number of countries that have removed capital punishment entirely from their laws to 96.

Images clockwise from top:

“No to the death penalty” is projected on to the Congress of Deputies building in Madrid, Spain, as part of Cities for Life, 30 November 2010.

Activists in Dublin, Ireland, show their support for US death row inmate Troy Davis, April 2010.

Heads of Amnesty International country offices take action against the death penalty in London, UK, April 2011.

British actress Keira Knightley participates in an Amnesty International action against the death penalty, June 2011.

The contribution of Amnesty International to humanity’s long journey towards abolition of capital punishment has been fundamental. Soon after our foundation, we began sending appeals to prevent the execution of prisoners of conscience, but broadened our “total and unconditional opposition to the death penalty” to include all prisoners.

As a founding member of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, every year on 10 October we join other activists in the abolitionist movement to celebrate the World Day Against the Death Penalty, calling for the abolition of this inhuman punishment worldwide.

The following pages highlight our campaign focus for this year. Take a look and find out what you can do to help bring us one step closer to universal abolition.



KILLING IN THE NAME OF JUSTICE

The death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights. It is the premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being in the name of justice. At the end of 2010, at least 17,800 people were under sentence of death around the world, waiting for governments to kill them.

The application of the death penalty is often discriminatory and used disproportionately against the poor and marginalized. It is often imposed and carried out arbitrarily, in violation of international prohibitions and safeguards.

In some countries, the death penalty is used to silence political opposition. In other countries, flaws in the judicial process are exacerbated by discrimination, prosecutorial misconduct, a non-independent judiciary and inadequate legal representation. The risk of executing the innocent can never be eliminated.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature of the crime, the characteristics of the offender, or the method used by the state to carry out the execution.

END THIS CRUEL, INHUMAN, DEGRADING PUNISHMENT

Death row is where the death penalty's cruel, inhuman and degrading nature is most keenly felt. Inmates live each day with the anguish of waiting to be killed. The psychological suffering of having an execution date set, or an appeal denied, cannot be measured.

Added to this anguish are the grim conditions that death row prisoners must endure. Prisoners sentenced to death are often shackled and confined in small, dark cells. These cells can be airless, hot and infested with insects. Prisoners are routinely denied basic needs like proper food and exercise. Visits from friends or family – even letters and cards – are restricted.

This suffering is magnified by the secrecy that often surrounds the death penalty. In several countries around the world, officials

fail to notify death row inmates and their families of the date of execution. In doing so, they deny prisoners the possibility of seeing or hearing from their loved ones for the last time. And once an execution is carried out, officials may refuse to return the body of the prisoner to their family or simply fail to tell the family where the body is. Such refusals coupled with the secrecy that shrouds the actual execution amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

STOP THE TORTURE

Despite the clear international ban on torture, Amnesty International regularly records cases of people being sentenced to death or executed for “crimes” they “confessed” under torture. The practice of deliberately inflicting severe pain or suffering in detention, whether physical or mental, is widespread and occurs in most regions of the world.

Image above: Amnesty International activists in Switzerland demonstrate in support of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, sentenced to death for adultery in Iran. Berne, November 2010.

Image below: A poster for the 1989 Amnesty International campaign against the death penalty.



**ALL THOSE IN FAVOR OF THE
DEATH PENALTY, RAISE YOUR HAND.**

Members of the United States Armed Forces, military, police, and other law enforcement officials who support the death penalty are invited to raise their right hand in support of the death penalty. Amnesty International USA, 1000 Broadway

SAVE LIVES, CHANGE LAWS



© Public Association 'Legislative Initiative'

BELARUS

As many as 400 people may have been executed in Belarus since it gained independence in 1991. The use of the death penalty is compounded by a flawed criminal justice system and there is credible evidence that torture and ill-treatment are used to extract “confessions”, which are then used as a basis for conviction.

Prisoners are told they will be executed just moments before their death sentence is carried out. They are killed with a bullet to the back of the head. Sometimes more than one bullet is needed.

In March 2010, after a year-long hiatus when for the first time no executions were recorded in Europe and the former Soviet Union, the Belarusian authorities executed two men. Vasily Yuzepchuk and Andrei Zhuk were killed with a shot to the back of the head.

Their deaths – and the manner in which their families were treated by the authorities – epitomize how this brutal punishment is applied in Belarus.

As with many other countries around the world, the death penalty is shrouded in secrecy. Families are not told of the execution until after the fact; they are not even told where their loved ones are buried.

On 19 March 2010, when Andrei Zhuk's mother tried to deliver a food parcel to the prison in Minsk where her son was held, the parcel was returned to her by the prison authorities as he “had been moved”. She was told not to come looking for her son any more, but to wait for official notification from the court. On the morning of 22 March, she was informed by staff at the prison that her son had been executed along with Vasily Yuzepchuk.

In October 2010, Andrei Zhuk's mother filed a legal case against the Belarusian authorities for violating her right to manifest and practise her religion by refusing to release her son's body or to tell her where he had been buried. She has spoken of the anguish she feels at not knowing where her son's body lies. She has also described how Andrei's young son often stands silently in front of his father's portrait. “What he thinks about now, I don't know,” she said.

In March 2003, the UN Human Rights Committee found in a case brought by the lawyer of Anton Bondarenko, executed in Belarus in 1999, “that complete secrecy



Image left: Prison cell housing death row prisoners in Minsk, Belarus. September 2009.

Image right: A youth group in Zurich, Switzerland, demonstrates against the death penalty in Belarus, June 2009.

surrounding the date of execution, and the place of burial and the refusal to hand over the body for burial have the effect of intimidating or punishing families by intentionally leaving them in a state of uncertainty and mental distress” and that this amounted to inhuman treatment. Despite this finding, the veil of secrecy surrounding the use of the death penalty in Belarus has not been lifted.

New sentences

Three more death sentences were imposed in Belarus in 2010. Two men were sentenced to death by shooting on 14 May for crimes committed during an armed robbery in October 2009. Their sentences were upheld by the Belarusian Supreme Court on 20 September 2010, and a subsequent appeal to the President for clemency was rejected.

The two men were believed to have been executed between 14 and 19 July 2011, although the relatives of the two men have received no official confirmation of the deaths. The third man was sentenced to death in September 2010; his sentence was confirmed in February 2011.

Speaking at the UN in May 2010, Belarus officials stated that they were considering abolition. Amnesty International is now urging the President of Belarus to suspend all executions and commute all death sentences as a first step towards abolition.

SAVE LIVES

We are working with the NGO Human Rights Centre Viasna, in Belarus, calling on President Lukashenka to immediately suspend executions and commute all death sentences in the country.

Go to amnesty.org/en/50/campaigns/death-penalty and sign our on-line petition.



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Leng Guoquan

CHINA

Leng Guoquan, a seafood trader, was sentenced to death for drug-related offences on 16 December 2009 by the Dandong City Intermediate People's Court in Liaoning province, north-east China. His sentence followed an unfair trial and a conviction based on testimonies from witnesses who either have since retracted their statements or say they were tortured. Leng Guoquan himself has always denied the charges against him and says he confessed only because he was tortured.

Detained on 19 January 2009, Leng Guoquan was allegedly punched, kicked and electrocuted repeatedly. His torture also included near-suffocation, sleep deprivation and being hung by his arms for long periods. On 24 March 2009, he was forced to read out a confession on camera. The recording is the first formal report of his interrogations included in his case file.

On 19 July 2009, Leng Guoquan's lawyer filed a complaint with the Dandong City Procuratorate, raising concerns about the torture allegations and providing statements from three fellow detainees who all testified that they had seen Leng Guoquan's injuries. The complaint urged the procuratorate to

initiate an investigation and bring those responsible to justice.

The torture allegations were not considered by the Dandong City Intermediate People's Court which tried Leng Guoquan. On 23 August 2010, the Liaoning Provincial Procuratorate confirmed that there were wounds on Leng Guoquan's body, but stated that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that the injuries were inflicted during interrogation.

Leng Guoquan's appeal against the judgement took place on 7 December 2010 before the Liaoning Provincial Higher People's Court. The defence called 56 witnesses but the court only heard three of them. A verdict is pending.

SAVE LENG GUOQUAN

Go to

amnesty.org/en/50/campaigns/death-penalty
and sign our petition calling on the Chinese authorities not to execute Leng Guoquan.



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Suliamon Olyfemi

SAUDI ARABIA

Many people in Saudi Arabia are sentenced to death on the basis of a “confession” obtained under duress, torture or deception. Nigerian national Suliamon Olyfemi was among hundreds of foreign nationals from Somalia, Ghana and Nigeria detained in mass arrests in September 2002, following a dispute which resulted in the death of a Saudi Arabian policeman. Suliamon, who maintains his innocence, was subsequently sentenced to death.

Twelve others arrested with Suliamon were sentenced to prison terms and corporal punishment. The 13 men received an unfair trial conducted entirely in Arabic, which they do not speak, and none of them had any legal representation. No interpretation or translation of the proceedings was provided. Some of the men were allegedly tortured and otherwise ill-treated during their arrest and detention by being beaten or hung upside down. According to information received by Amnesty International, some of them received electric shocks to their genitals.

SAVE SULIAMON OLYFEMI

Go to

[amnesty.org/en/50/campaigns/death-penalty](https://www.amnesty.org/en/50/campaigns/death-penalty)

and email the Saudi Arabian ambassador in Nigeria, asking him or her to urge Saudi Arabia to stop executions now.



Five men were executed in Bangladesh only 13 hours after their sentence was finalized



96 countries have abolished the death penalty for all crimes



Four men were executed in Equatorial Guinea within an hour of being sentenced to death by a military court



34 countries are abolitionist in practice



At least 17,833 people worldwide were under sentence of death at the end of 2010



Four countries in the G20 executed in 2010: China, Japan, Saudi Arabia and the USA



The President of Mongolia established a moratorium on executions in January 2010



Gabon abolished the death penalty in February 2010



China executed more people than the rest of the world put together



23 countries carried out executions in 2010



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Amnesty International activists in France at a rally against the use of the death penalty in Iran. Paris, March 2011.

Cover: Illustration
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RECOMMENDATIONS

As a first step towards full abolition, we are asking governments that retain the death penalty to:

- immediately place a moratorium on executions, in line with recent UN recommendations
 - commute all death sentences to prison terms
 - ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at abolition of the death penalty
- amend national laws in line with international human rights law. This means:
 - banning death sentences for those who were aged under 18 at the time of the alleged crime, for anyone suffering from a mental illness, and for pregnant women or mothers still caring for an infant
 - restricting use of the death penalty to only the most serious crimes
 - ending mandatory death sentences
 - ensuring that all death penalty cases are tried according to international fair trial standards

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English