

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL QUOTES

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Gambian authorities urged to halt further executions

Responding to the official confirmation from the Gambian government given late on Monday that the authorities had executed nine people, Paule Rigaud, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Africa said:

"We are appalled that the Gambian authorities carried out the nine executions and urge them to ensure that no further executions take place. The death penalty is always the ultimate denial of human rights and in these cases the government has compounded the inhumanity by giving little or no notice to either the prisoners or their families. The Gambian authorities must immediately return the prisoners' bodies to their relatives, and declare an official moratorium on the death penalty."

Background

On both 19 and 20 August, in a television address broadcast to mark the Muslim feast of Eid-al-Fitrt, President Jammeh announced to the nation that by the middle of September all existing death sentences would be "carried out to the letter". After the executions, 38 people are still believed to remain on death row in the country.

According to the Gambian Government, before these latest executions the last execution in the country took place in 1985, 27 years ago. So far this year in Africa, 22 of the 54 member states of the African Union were abolitionist in practice, and 16 further were abolitionist in law for all crimes.