

Media Advisory

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USA: No return to execution. New AI report on the US death penalty as a barrier to extradition

One more reason for the USA to abolish the death penalty is that its increasingly isolated resort to this punishment is undermining international cooperation on law enforcement, concludes an Amnesty International report issued today.

*Amnesty International's report, *No return to execution - The US death penalty as a barrier to extradition*, gives an overview of the emerging global consensus against capital punishment, and the simultaneous growth of extradition protections against this penalty.*

This has been demonstrated in the past few days with the reports that Spain will not extradite eight alleged members of Al-Qa=ida to the USA where they could face the death penalty or trial by military commissions recently announced by presidential order. Landmark rulings earlier this year by the highest courts in Canada and South Africa provide more examples of this.

As more and more countries turn against capital punishment, they are at the same time refusing to send criminal suspects to the United States or any other retentionist country without first receiving guarantees that the individual will not be subject to the death penalty.

"To date, the USA has reacted to the global abolitionist trend by adopting a bunker mentality rather than embracing the aspirations of the international community," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International fears that in its "war against terrorism" the US government -- a strong proponent of judicial killing -- may resort to tactics to circumvent extradition protections. As the report illustrates, there is a history of US conduct -- including the use of abduction -- that fuels such concern.

Amnesty International believes that for justice to be done, and to be seen to be done, governments must maintain scrupulous standards of legality and transparency. To do otherwise, the report concludes, will only serve to undermine the search for justice, damage the reputation of the United States, and cause problems in international relations.

"The solution to the barriers raised in capital extraditions is not the weakening of extradition safeguards as some have suggested -- it is the total abolition of the death penalty," Amnesty International said.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>

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