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SPAIN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

With the Senate vote today to abolish the death penalty in the Military Penal Code, Spain joins the growing number of countries that have irrevocably renounced under all circumstances the use of this cruel and inhuman punishment.

"At a moment when the recent executions in Nigeria have demonstrated to the world the callous and brutal nature of this irreversible punishment, Spain's example gives renewed momentum to the abolitionist cause worldwide," Amnesty International said.

Spain's decision brings to 55 the number of countries in the world which have abolished the death penalty for all crimes. Fifteen other countries have abolished it for common crimes such as murder, while 30 other countries are abolitionist *de facto*, in that they do not carry out executions. More than half the countries in the world have now abolished the death penalty in law or practice.

"Spain's new legislation should act as an example to the countries which still pursue a *de facto* abolitionist policy and as an encouragement to reconsider their policy to those countries persisting in the use of the death penalty," Amnesty International said.

The death penalty for common crimes was abolished in Spain by the 1978 Constitution. The last executions took place in September 1975, two months before the death of General Francisco Franco.

The campaign towards total abolition of the death penalty generated an extraordinary degree of political consensus in the country which reflected the depth of the commitment of Spain to the abolitionist cause. No votes against abolition were cast either in the Congress or in the Senate.

The Spanish Section of Amnesty International played a leading role in securing the required political support for abolition. The human rights organization has worked in Spain for many years to secure total abolition. Over the last two years the Spanish Section undertook an intensive lobbying campaign of the parliaments of the Spanish Autonomous Communities who, in turn, petitioned the Congress of Deputies and the Senate.

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