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UKRAINE: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES UKRAINE'S DECISION TO
ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY AND INSTITUTE AN IMMEDIATE MORATORIUM ON
EXECUTIONS

Amnesty International welcomes the Ukrainian government's commitment to halt executions immediately and abolish the death penalty as part of its preparation to join the Council of Europe.

"Ukraine's historic decision to abolish the death penalty gives a boost to human rights worldwide and is of special significance for other countries preparing to join the Council of Europe, including the Russian Federation," Amnesty International said.

Prior to September, Ukraine had one of the highest rates of judicial executions in the world. Sixty prisoners were executed in 1994 and only two sentences were commuted, according to official figures. In 1995, Amnesty International recorded at least two executions but the organization believes that the true figure is much higher.

During a meeting between delegates of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Ukrainian government officials in Kiev yesterday, the Minister of Justice, Serhiy Holovaty, confirmed the government's commitment to abolish the death penalty and institute an immediate moratorium on executions.

"When the formal accession of Ukraine to the Council of Europe takes place later this year, Ukraine will join the 100 countries in the world which have abolished the death penalty in law or practice," Amnesty International said. "Albania and Moldova made similar commitments in July, prior to joining the Council of Europe."

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