

22 February 2002

AI Index IOR 61/002/2002 - News Service Nr. 32

### **Council of Europe: A step closer to a death penalty-free zone**

*The Council of Europe has sent a clear political message that the death penalty is completely unacceptable, Amnesty International said, welcoming the adoption of Protocol No. 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 21 February.*

*"This is a step closer towards creating a death penalty-free zone."*

*Protocol No. 13 bans the death penalty in all circumstances, including for crimes committed in times of war or imminent danger of war. It closes the gap left under Protocol No. 6 which prohibits the death penalty except for acts committed in times of war or imminent danger of war in all states which are party to it.*

*"Member states of the Council of Europe must now sign and ratify Protocol 13 as soon as it opens for signature," Amnesty International said. "This is an opportunity for the Russian Federation and Turkey -- who have not yet ratified Protocol 6 -- to demonstrate their opposition to capital punishment."*

*The organization repeated its call on Armenia and Azerbaijan to take all necessary steps to ratify the European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocols, including No. 6 and No. 13.*

*Protocol No. 13 will apply only to those members states of the Council of Europe which ratify it. It will open for signature on 3 May 2002 and will enter into force three months after the date on which ten member states agree to be bound by it.*

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