

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: ASA 25/011/2011  
8 September 2011

### **Amnesty International welcomes 5,000 days execution-free in South Korea**

Amnesty International welcomes today's milestone of 5,000 days without executions in South Korea and calls on its parliament, the National Assembly, to seize the opportunity which this anniversary presents and take the final step to abolish the death penalty in law.

South Korea last carried out executions in December 1997 when 23 people were executed. As of today, 60 people remain on death row in South Korea.

Draft legislation aiming at abolition of the death penalty is now awaiting consideration in the Legislative and Judiciary Committee of the National Assembly. Although it has been 5,000 days since South Korea carried out executions, removing the death penalty from national legislation is the only way to ensure that retrograde steps are not taken to violate human rights in the name of justice.

The death penalty violates the right to life and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. The application of the death penalty is often discriminatory and is used disproportionately against the poor and other marginalized groups.

While governments often justify the retention of the death penalty as an effective public security measure, there is no convincing evidence that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than other punishments. The most recent UN study on the issue concluded the same.

In some countries, flaws in the judicial process are exacerbated by prosecutorial misconduct, non-independent judiciary and inadequate legal representation. As long as the death penalty exists, the risk of executing the innocent can never be eliminated.

There is a real momentum towards worldwide abolition of the death penalty: as of today, more than two-thirds of the countries in the world have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Less than half of all retentionist countries regularly execute. Even in countries where support for the death penalty remains strong, measures have been taken towards restricting its use or abolishing it in legislation. In the United States of America, three states have abolished the death penalty for all crimes since 2007.

In December 2010 the United Nations General Assembly adopted, with more support than ever before, the third resolution calling for the establishment of a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

In the Asia and the Pacific, out of 41 countries, only 14 are retentionist and one of these, Mongolia, has not carried out any executions since 2008. Reflecting a commitment to abolition across the region, an independent regional network aimed at the abolition of the

death penalty, the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) was set up in 2006 and has members from 23 countries.

In February 2010 in a five to four ruling, the South Korea Constitutional Court stated that capital punishment did not violate "human dignity and worth" as protected in the Constitution. Two of the five judges who upheld the constitutionality of the penalty nonetheless stated that legislation to abolish or amend the death penalty would be desirable. Amnesty International urges the authorities of South Korea to move to abolish the death penalty as a matter of urgency.

ENDS/

Public Document  
International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK  
[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)

\*\*\*\*\*