

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Death penalty: support for UN call for moratorium on executions reiterated as new states support landmark resolution**

The UN General Assembly today adopted its sixth resolution calling for a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty with an overwhelming majority. The continued support for the call suggests that it is just a matter of time before the death penalty is confined to the history books.

An overwhelming majority of UN member states threw their weight behind today's resolution. 117 of the UN's 193 member states voted in favour of the proposal. Only 40 states voted against it and 31 abstained at the vote.

The resolution, which was proposed by 89 UN Member States led by Argentina and Mongolia, is an important instrument that carries considerable political weight, unequivocally framing the death penalty as a global human rights concern. Its text also makes other strong calls on countries that still use the death penalty, for example to reduce the number of offences for which this punishment can be imposed and to increase the transparency in its use, including by making publicly available information on any scheduled executions and by following fair and transparent clemency procedures.

Since 2007, the UN General Assembly has adopted six resolutions calling for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty, with support for the resolutions increasing significantly over time. This has generated new momentum for campaigning against the death penalty, with 13 countries abolishing the punishment for all crimes since 2007 and two - Guinea and Mongolia - moving significantly closer to full abolition.

Amnesty International welcomes the several positive changes in the voting recorded this year. New votes in favour came from Guinea, Malawi, Namibia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Swaziland. As a further positive sign, Zimbabwe moved from opposition to abstention. Regrettably, Equatorial Guinea, Niger, Philippines and Seychelles went from a vote in favour to abstention; while Burundi and South Sudan moved from vote in favour to vote against. Maldives also moved from abstention to vote against.

When the UN was founded in 1945 only eight of the then 51 UN Member States had abolished the death penalty. Today, 101 Member States have abolished the death penalty for all crimes, and in total 138 out of the 193 have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. In 2015, 169 (88%) of the 193 UN Member States were executions-free.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. The organization urges all countries that still retain the death penalty to immediately establish a moratorium on executions; commute all death sentences and abolish the death penalty for all crimes.

