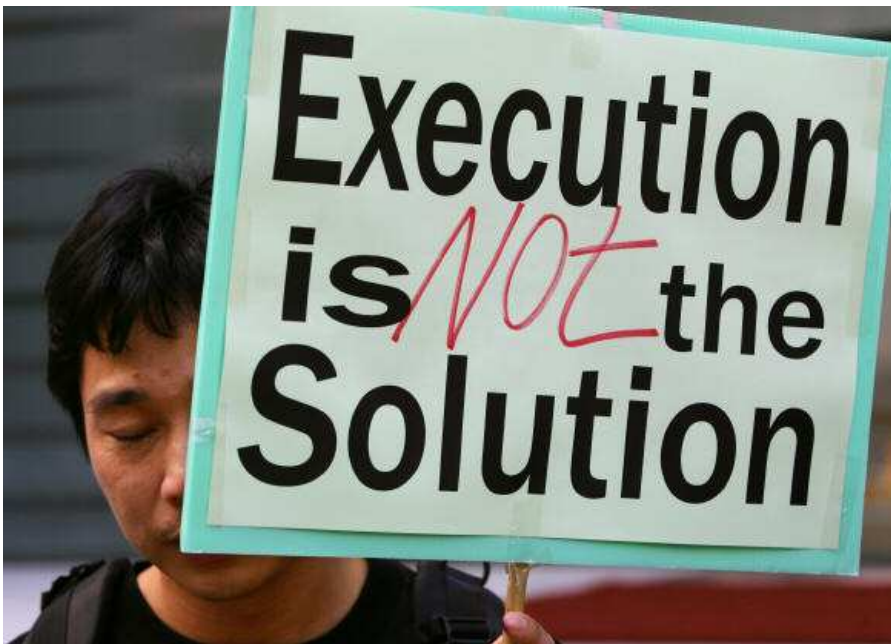


# TOWARDS ABOLITION

People are no longer willing to stand by while their governments execute in the name of justice.

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A protester carrying a placard calling for the abolition of the death penalty demonstrates outside a Chinese liaison office in Hong Kong, July 2005.

More and more people across the world are condemning the death penalty for what it is – a brutal punishment that has no place in a just society. Their calls have not gone unheard. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, two thirds of all countries have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice. By contrast, at the turn of the last century, only three countries had permanently abolished the death penalty. The trend is clear: the world is standing up and saying “no” to executions. And that principle has been reinforced at the highest international level.

In December 2007, the UN General Assembly – the UN’s highest political body – voted 104 to 54 for a resolution on a moratorium on executions “with a view” to total abolition of the death penalty. This landmark decision carries considerable moral and political weight, although it is not legally binding on states. Establishing a moratorium on executions is an important tool for convincing states still using the death penalty to engage in a nation-wide debate and to review their laws on capital punishment. While death penalty laws are under review, all executions are postponed.

The resolution is the international initiative that emerged from regional developments that have embraced the campaign to end capital punishment. Europe has emerged as a virtually death penalty-free area and a leader in campaigning for abolition. The continent of Africa is largely execution free with only seven of the region’s 53 countries known to have carried out state killings in 2007.

The USA, a country other nations cite when justifying their own use of capital punishment, is moving steadily away from the death penalty. The number of executions carried out and death sentences imposed has dropped dramatically in recent years. In New Jersey, the death penalty was abolished in December 2007 and several other states have legislation pending to end capital punishment.

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Hundreds of protesters hold a vigil outside Alipore Central Jail, Calcutta, India, where Dhananjay Chatterjee was hanged on 14 August 2004.

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Since 1979, over 70 countries have abolished the death penalty. Once abolished, the death penalty is seldom reintroduced.

Campaigners for abolition across the world are joining forces, creating a truly global movement against capital punishment. Key events include the annual World Congress against the Death Penalty, spearheaded by the World Coalition against the Death Penalty. National coalitions have emerged in several countries, including the Anti-Death Penalty Action Network (ADPAN) in Asia. Uniting them is the growing awareness that there are alternative punishments to the death penalty which are effective and which do not involve the premeditated and

cold-blooded killing of a human being by the state in the name of justice.

Amnesty International campaigns for the total abolition of the death penalty. We call on all nations to work for a world free from executions and to make the 2007 UN resolution a reality.

**There are alternative punishments to the death penalty which do not involve the premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being by the state in the name of justice.**

## FIND OUT MORE

- For an up-to-date list of abolitionist and retentionist countries, see [www.amnesty.org/en/death-penalty](http://www.amnesty.org/en/death-penalty)
- For general information about the worldwide campaign to abolish the death penalty, see [www.worldcoalition.org](http://www.worldcoalition.org)
- Take action on 10 October, World Day against the Death Penalty. Find out how on Amnesty International's website.

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