

AI INDEX: AMR 17/01/00
7 January 2000

New legislation: Bermuda shows the way forward

Amnesty International today welcomed new legislation by the Bermuda government abolishing the death penalty and judicial corporal punishment.

"Bermuda's commitment on 23 December brings the number of abolitionist countries worldwide at a total of over 70," Amnesty International said. "As many of her neighbours in the Caribbean continue to resort to state-sanctioned judicial killing with renewed vigour, the decision to abolish the death penalty in Bermuda will be welcomed by all who have come to recognize that it has no place in the new millennium."

Given that Bermuda has not carried out an execution for 22 years, the removal of the death penalty from the Criminal Code will serve as a reminder to those countries which are *de facto* abolitionist – of the need for them to formalise their *de facto* abolitionist stance in law.

"This important decision -- by the Bermuda government to abolish the death penalty will serve as a fine example to those countries which continue to use judicial execution in their response to violent crime," the organization added.

"Abolition of the death penalty in Bermuda will without doubt be a substantial contribution to the promotion of human rights in a region where several countries still practice this most cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment."

Background

In 1899, only three countries had abolished the death penalty for all crimes. Today, more than half of the world's countries are abolitionist in law or practice. Abolitionist *de facto* countries are those countries which have either not carried out any executions for 10 years, or have made an international commitment not to execute.

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