

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Antigua and Barbuda: Amnesty International welcomes the commitment to condemn human rights violations against persons because of their sexual orientation, but regrets the rejection of recommendations to abolish the death penalty**

### ***Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Antigua and Barbuda***

Amnesty International welcomes that there have been no executions in Antigua and Barbuda in the last 11 years, and further welcomes the government's commitment to rigorously apply international standards for fair trial in all death penalty cases.<sup>1</sup> However, Amnesty International is disappointed that Antigua and Barbuda rejected recommendations from six States to abolish the death penalty.<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International rejects the government's justification that it does not have a political mandate to abolish the death penalty.<sup>3</sup> The organization believes that public opinion on capital punishment is overwhelmingly based on a desire to be protected from violence and to be free from fear of crime. A more effective strategy to address public safety would involve improving the capacity of the police to detect and solve crimes, enhancing the criminal justice system, and tackling the root causes of crime and violence more effectively. Amnesty International recalls that the death penalty violates the right to life as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and urges Antigua and Barbuda to impose a formal moratorium on the use of the death penalty with a view to abolishing it; to commute all death sentences to terms of imprisonment; to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR; and to vote in support of the next General Assembly resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

Amnesty International welcomes Antigua and Barbuda's commitment to condemn human rights violations against persons because of their sexual orientation<sup>4</sup> and to institute policies and initiatives to address discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>5</sup> However, the organization emphasizes that the removal of discriminatory laws is a first step in fighting the stigma surrounding homosexuality, and regrets the government's rejection of recommendations to decriminalize sexual relations between consenting adults of the same sex.<sup>6</sup>

Amnesty International welcomes Antigua and Barbuda's support of recommendations to sign and ratify international human rights conventions including the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/19/5, recommendation 67.24 (United Kingdom).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., recommendations 69.1 (France), 69.2 (Australia), 69.3 (United Kingdom), 69.4 (Canada), 69.5 (Brazil), 69.6 (France) and 69.7 (Spain).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., paragraph 34.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., recommendation 67.28 (United States of America).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., recommendation 67.29 (Canada).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., recommendations 69.17 (France), 69.18 (Canada), 69.19 (Hungary), 69.20 (United States of America) and 69.21 (Spain).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., recommendations 67.1 (Trinidad and Tobago), 67.2 (Indonesia), 67.3 (Morocco), 67.4 (Algeria) and 67.5 (Ecuador).

**Background**

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Antigua and Barbuda on 16 March during its 19<sup>th</sup> session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

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