

AI INDEX: IOR 40/03/99
17 November 1999

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Amnesty International voices disappointment at the UN General Assembly's failure to take action on the death penalty

Amnesty International today voiced regret that a proposed resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium on executions was not acted upon in the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in New York.

"This development has more to do with the politics of the General Assembly than with the death penalty," Amnesty International said.

The resolution, co-sponsored by over 70 countries, including the European Union, would have called on all states that still maintain the death penalty *"to establish a moratorium on executions, with a view to completely abolishing the death penalty"*. The Third Committee decided not to take action at this session of the General Assembly after running into strong opposition by some states -- led by Egypt and Singapore -- who claimed that calls for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide violated the sovereignty of States.

As set forth in the Vienna Declaration adopted by the UN World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, all states have the duty to promote and protect human rights, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems.

"It is clear that the protection of all human rights is a legitimate concern for the international community."

"One hundred and five countries have now abolished the death penalty in law or practice, and the number is growing each year," Amnesty International added. "This momentary setback at the General Assembly will not stop the steady trend towards worldwide abolition of the death penalty."

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