

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

10 October 2011  
Index: AMR 15/001/2011

## **Barbados: Abolition of mandatory death penalty by the end of 2011 would be a first step in the right direction**

Amnesty International positively noted reported statements that the mandatory death penalty will be abolished in Barbados by the end of 2011 and urged the country's authorities to swiftly move to turn these affirmations into reality.

Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs Adriel Brathwaite was reported in local newspaper *The Barbados Advocate* on 2 October 2011 as saying that he expected that changes in national legislation to remove the mandatory imposition of the death penalty would be finalized by the end of the year, reducing chances of death sentences being imposed in the country. The move would be a first welcome step in Barbados' journey towards abolition of the death penalty.

The last executions in Barbados were carried out in 1984, when Noel Jordan, Melvin Inniss and Errol Farrell were hanged. The mandatory imposition of the death penalty, which does not allow any possibility of taking into account the defendant's personal circumstances or the circumstances of the particular offence when determining a sentence, has been found by international and regional bodies to be inconsistent with human rights.

In 2007 the Inter-American Court on Human Rights found the mandatory death sentences imposed on those convicted of murder in Barbados to be in contravention of the prohibition against arbitrary deprivation of life, as recognized in the American Convention on Human Rights.

In May 2009, the Attorney General Freundel Stuart announced that the mandatory death sentence in cases of murder and treason would be abolished in Barbados, in accordance with the Inter-American Court landmark judgment. However, to date, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago are the only countries in the Caribbean region to retain the mandatory death penalty.

In his interview with the newspaper, in relation to crime in Barbados Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs Adriel Brathwaite stated that, while acknowledging the need for a debate on the death penalty, what is needed is "to reduce whatever brings and drives people to crime" and that the country's resources would be best placed to tackle these issues.

The United States of America continues to be the only executioner in the Americas. In recent years, with the exception of one execution in Saint Kitts and Nevis in 2008, the Caribbean remained an execution-free region. However, authorities of several retentionist countries in the area have been proposing legislative changes aimed at resuming executions as a response to increased crime rates.

Amnesty International holds that the death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and it violates the right to life as recognized in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. As of today, 139 countries around the world have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Amnesty International urges the governments of Barbados and all other Caribbean countries to join the worldwide trend and immediately abolish the death penalty for all crimes.