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**PUBLIC STATEMENT  
UKRAINE SHOULD ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY BY JANUARY 2000**

Amnesty International today urged the authorities in Ukraine to fulfil their commitment to abolish the death penalty. Although Ukraine introduced a *de facto* moratorium on executions in March 1997 the country has not yet removed this cruel and inhuman punishment from its statute books and no official moratorium has been secured in law.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe warned Ukraine that it would commence the procedure for the annulment of the credentials of the Ukrainian delegation at the Council of Europe if substantial progress was not made by 21 June 1999 towards fulfilling the commitments made on joining the Council of Europe in November 1995. Today the Parliamentary Assembly decided to extend this deadline until its next session in January 2000. By this date Ukraine should have made substantial progress towards reforms aimed at the protection of human rights.

Ukraine made the commitment to abolish the death penalty in November 1995 upon entry to the Council of Europe. The government of Ukraine also committed itself to sign and ratify Protocol No.6 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention) relating to the abolition of the death penalty, within three years of its accession to the Council of Europe. Neither of these commitments was fulfilled by the Council of Europe's deadline of November 1998. After joining the Council of Europe the Ukrainian parliament (*Verkhovna Rada*) debated the question of abolition of the death penalty on a number of occasions but without reaching a consensus on abolition in law.

Amnesty International calls on the Ukrainian authorities to take the following steps:

The Ukrainian parliament should move swiftly to ratify Protocol No.6 to the European Convention on Human Rights and abolish the death penalty at the very latest by the next session of the Parliamentary Assembly in January 2000.

The Ukrainian parliament should enact legislation to remove the death penalty from the Ukrainian penal code.

All existing death sentences should be commuted and no further death sentences should be imposed.

The authorities should publish comprehensive information about the use of the death penalty, including the names and case details of all prisoners executed and all prisoners currently under sentence of death.

In addition to the abolition of the death penalty the Parliamentary Assembly is requesting from Ukraine substantial developments by its next session in January 2000 in several areas, including the enactment of a framework law on legal policy for the protection of human rights as well as a framework law on legal and judicial reforms and the adoption of a new criminal code and code of criminal procedure.

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**For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on 44 171 413 5566.**