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## **Resumption in executions is a shameful political manoeuvre**

Politicians need to stop presenting the death penalty as a quick-fix to reduce high crime rates and instead address problems in the criminal justice system, Amnesty International said.

“Politicians need to stop playing to the gallery and show leadership on public security. There is simply no convincing evidence that the death penalty acts as a special deterrent. Instead they need to focus on effective solutions to address crime,” said Audrey Gaughran, Director of Global Issues at Amnesty International.

To mark World Day Against the Death Penalty, a new briefing by Amnesty International *“Not Making Us Safer”* highlights the lack of evidence to support the claim that the death penalty reduces serious crime.

A minority of countries have resumed or are planning to resume executions, often as a knee-jerk reaction to high or rising crime rates or to especially heinous murders.

The past year has seen a resumption of executions in Gambia, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Nigeria, Pakistan, and, most recently, Viet Nam.

Despite this, countries that execute remain a small minority - 140 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice.

There is no convincing evidence that resuming executions has an impact on crime-control:

- India saw its murder rate decline by 23 percent over the past decade, and no executions took place between 2004 – 2011.
- In Canada, the homicide rate fell in the years after the death penalty was abolished in 1976.
- A recent study carried out in Trinidad and Tobago also found no correlation between executions, imprisonment and crime.

“Political posturing in favour of resuming executions distracts attention from the long-term solutions that effectively tackle the problems in the criminal justice system,” said Audrey Gaughran.

Effective policing, fair, functioning criminal justice systems, and improvements in education and employment levels have been proven to be key in reducing levels of crime.

Politicians often allege strong levels of public support for the death penalty as justification for its use. However, polls tend to simplify the complexities of public opinion.

When factors including the risk of wrongful execution and the unfairness of trials are considered, public support for the death penalty falls.

“Victims of crime deserve justice but the death penalty is not the answer,” said Audrey Gaughran. “Resuming executions in order to look tough on crime is making people’s lives subject to political expediency.”

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution.

The death penalty violates the right to life, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.