

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Open Letter

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Open letter from Amnesty International Secretary General Irene Khan to UN member states calling for a global moratorium on executions

On the occasion of the World Day against the Death Penalty, I am writing to urge all UN member states to support a United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for a global moratorium on executions. This initiative is supported by countries from all regions of the world and would be an important milestone towards achieving the General Assembly's stated aim: the world wide abolition of the death penalty.

The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. It is discriminatory and often used disproportionately against the poor, minorities and members of racial, ethnic and religious communities. It is often imposed after a grossly unfair trial. But even when trials are fair the risk of executing the innocent can never be fully eliminated.

A momentum is gathering to end capital punishment in all countries: the majority of UN member states, from all regions of the world, have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice and only 25 countries have carried out executions in 2006. Amnesty International's statistics also show a significant, overall decline in the number of reported executions in 2006. This trend towards abolition has been recognized and supported by the UN Secretary-General and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Amnesty International believes that the proposed resolution should include the following elements:

- o Calling on retentionist states to establish a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition of the death penalty;
- o Calling on retentionist states to respect international standards that guarantee the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty; and
- o Requesting the UN Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the moratorium to the next session of the UNGA.

I urge you to support this resolution.

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