

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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UN ENDORSES VOTE TO END EXECUTIONS

Amnesty International today urged all states that retain the death penalty to establish an immediate moratorium on executions as the first step toward abolishing the death penalty. The call came after the UN General Assembly today endorsed a resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, the third since 2007.

The resolution was adopted by 109 votes in favour, 41 against with 35 abstentions at the UN General Assembly's plenary session in New York.

More UN Member States supported the resolution this time than the previous vote in 2008 and the number of votes against it has noticeably decreased, confirming the worldwide trend towards ending the use of capital punishment.

"The UN General Assembly today sent once again a clear message that the premeditated killing by the state must end," said José Luis Díaz, Amnesty International's representative at the UN in New York.

"The minority of countries that continue to use the death penalty should immediately establish a moratorium on executions as the first step towards ending this ultimate denial of human rights."

When the UN was founded in 1945 only eight states had abolished the death penalty for all crimes. Today, 136 out of the 192 UN member states have abolished the death penalty in law or practice.

Bhutan, Kiribati, Maldives, Mongolia and Togo changed their vote from 2008 and now support the moratorium. In a further sign of progress, Comoros, Nigeria, Solomon Islands and Thailand moved from opposition to the moratorium in 2008 to abstention today..

"These positive changes are an encouraging development towards abolishing the death penalty everywhere. We now hope to see national legislation introduced to remove the death penalty in these countries as soon as possible," added José Luis Díaz.

The UN General Assembly will discuss the issue again in late 2012.