

A Death Penalty-Free World!

PRIME MINISTER & AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL LAUNCH NEW INITIATIVE
10th October 2007

Today on the 'World Day against the Death Penalty' the New Zealand Government and Amnesty International are launching a new international initiative to create a global moratorium on the death penalty.

At 11.30am, the Prime Minister and Amnesty International's NZ Executive Director, Ced Simpson will be walking along the 'Death Penalty timeline' laid out on the steps of Parliament, before making respective announcements on international death penalty initiatives. The death penalty timeline shows the history of death penalty abolition from 1863, when Venezuela became the first country to abolish it, to the present time where 133 countries have now abolished the death penalty in practice or in law.

The time has now come to abolish the death penalty worldwide. Over the past decade an average of at least three countries a year have abolished the death penalty.

The first step in this campaign is a resolution calling for a moratorium on executions, to be voted on at the 62nd United Nations General Assembly starting in October 2007. This resolution is an important international milestone in the campaign to abolish the death penalty.

- 133 countries have now abolished the death penalty in law or in practice (90 countries have abolished the death penalty in law).
- In 2006, 91% of all known executions took place in just six countries; China, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan and the U.S.A.
- Only 25 states actually carried out executions in 2006.
- Amnesty International statistics show a decline in the number of 'known' executions from 2,148 in 2005 to 1,591 in 2006 (However, sources suggest China may execute up to 10,000 people a year).

The Prime Minister, Rt Hon Helen Clark is announcing today the New Zealand Government's intention to co-author the UNGA resolution, which is expected to call for a moratorium on executions.

Ced Simpson, NZ Executive Director of Amnesty International, announced the launch of this new Amnesty International campaign, working alongside the 'World Coalition against the Death Penalty' and pro-active governments such as New Zealand.

Ced Simpson said, "The case for abolition becomes more compelling with each passing year. Experience shows that executions brutalize everyone involved in the process and nowhere has it been shown that the death penalty has any special power to reduce crime or political violence."

"In many countries it is still used disproportionately against the poor and minorities, often as a tool for political repression. It inevitably results in the execution of many innocent people. It is a violation of fundamental human rights".

"A death penalty free world is now possible with strong political leadership and governmental champions, like New Zealand.

Resources Available:

AI Reports: The Death penalty V. Human Rights, Sept 2007; Global Moratorium on Executions Now, Aug 2007.

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