



Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Statement for adoption by the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights on the occasion of the 17th World Day against the Death Penalty (10 October 2019) ¹

On the occasion of the 17th World Day against the Death Penalty (10 October 2019), the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights reaffirms its commitment to the fight for the universal abolition of capital punishment. It reiterates that the death penalty is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and that its prohibition is a fundamental principle of the Council of Europe.

Coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the international Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted on 20 November 1989), this year's World Day against the Death Penalty focuses on the violations of the rights of children whose parents have been sentenced to death or executed. These children, who are often forgotten and socially disadvantaged, can suffer trauma at any stage in the process leading up to the parent's execution: arrest, trial, sentencing, time on death row, announcement of the execution date, the execution itself and its consequences. This emotional and psychological burden can violate their rights, including the right not to be separated from their parents (when one of the parents is on death row, where security is heightened), the right not to be discriminated against and not to suffer inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to information, education and health.

To date, over two-thirds (142) of the world's countries have abolished the death penalty in law or have not applied it for at least ten years. However, the death penalty is still applied in over 50 countries. In 2018, at least 690 executions were recorded and at the end of 2018, at least 19 000 people had been sentenced to death. The Committee deplores the fact that countries which have co-operation status with the Council of Europe (United States, Jordan, Japan, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority), as well as Belarus continue to hand down death sentences and/or carry out executions. It also condemns the decision made in July by the federal government of the United States to reinstate capital punishment.

The Committee asks parliamentarians to increase their commitment to the abolition of the death penalty at global level, in particular by raising this issue in their working relations with states that carry out this penalty. It again calls on those Council of Europe member states which have not yet done so, to sign and/or ratify Protocols Nos. 6 and 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibit capital punishment.

Lastly, the Committee reiterates its appeal to the states that have co-operation status with the Council of Europe – the United States, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Morocco and the Palestinian Authority – and to Belarus to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty and ultimately abolish it in law. In addition, it urges them to uphold the prohibition, set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on applying the death penalty to anyone under the age of 18 at the time of the alleged offence.

¹ Statement adopted by the committee on 1 October 2019.