

THE INHUMANITY OF THE DEATH PENALTY

OCTOBER 10TH
2011

WORLD DAY
**AGAINST THE
DEATH PENALTY**

**WORLD
COALITION**
AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

www.worldcoalition.org

10/10/11 : 9th World Day Against the Death Penalty

Responding to the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty's call for action, every year on October 10, citizens, national and international institutions and NGOs rally to oppose the death penalty and to unite behind the struggle for its universal abolition is a universal struggle. Since the creation of the World Day in 2003, hundreds of initiatives including debates, concerts, press conferences, demonstrations, petitions, and educational and cultural activities, have been organised in more than 70 countries across five continents.

This year, World Day focuses on the inhumanity of the death penalty

The dreadful conditions on death row inflict extreme psychological suffering and execution is a physical and mental assault. Around the world there are death row inmates held in appalling conditions; the cells are not suitable for a human being, the dietary regime is inadequate and, access to medical care is lacking.

Not only is the physical state of an inmate placed in cruel and unusual circumstances but their mind is also greatly affected by their situation, with many death row inmates suffering from mental illness and mental disabilities as a result of their death sentence.

Executions, regardless of the method used, are cruel and inhumane and can and have gone wrong in many cases. This world day is to raise awareness on the inhumanity of the death penalty throughout the entire process, from sentence to execution.

The Worldwide Trend towards Abolition



In 2010, 23 countries around the world carried out executions with the highest number of executions in China, Iran, North Korea and the United States. According to Amnesty International, there were 2,024 death sentences imposed in 67 countries in 2010. There still remains much secrecy surrounding the accurate accounting of executions worldwide with many governments not disclosing information to international governmental institutions or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Although executions continue to be carried out in many regions worldwide,



Rally in California for the 2010 World Day.



"We can live without the death penalty". Meeting in Baghdad, Iraq, World Day 2010.

there is an overall trend towards abolition. Every year there are fewer executions taking place and less people sentenced to death. In 2010, twenty-three countries were known to have carried out executions in comparison to the mid-1990s during which forty countries on average carried out death sentences according to Amnesty International figures. 139 countries have now abolished the death penalty in law and in practice as pressure from the international community rises and more governments turn away from this cruel and inhuman practice.



There is no human Way to kill

All methods of execution are inhumane and violate the right to be free from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The most commonly used forms of execution around the world include beheading, electrocution, hanging, lethal injection, shooting and stoning.

The form of execution varies from country to country: in China, Thailand, Vietnam and the United States of America, lethal injection is the most common form of execution; in Iran, Iraq or Japan, it is hanging.

In recent history, people have tried to find 'humane' way of executing prisoners. The French guillotine was named after a doctor who campaigned for its use as a humane alternative to execution by hanging. In 2010 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that hanging "*was an ineffectual and extremely painful method of killing, such as to amount to inhuman and degrading treatment*".

Execution by stoning is considered as a "*particularly cruel or inhuman means of execution*" by the UN Human Rights Committee.

Even lethal injection, which is sometimes considered as most humane method of execution, has caused many prisoners physical pain amounting to cruel and inhumane treatment. This includes having difficulty finding a vein for injection resulting in continuous and unnecessary prodding and poking of a prisoner's veins, or the anesthetic drug not taking full effect which could leave the inmate conscious when the poison to kill him is injected. Stanley Tookie Williams is just one example of a botched lethal



"Adieu!", Poster 4 Tomorrow, Jochen Schievink, Germany.



10 reasons to end the death penalty

Demonstration in Morocco against executions in the USA for the 2010 World Day.

Conference in Uvira, DRC, for World Day 2010.

Inhumane Conditions on Death Row



Around the world, prisoners on death row are kept in conditions which fall well below international human rights standards. This means inadequate cells, food and general living conditions. The level of hygiene and maintenance provided to the inmates is well below international standards on many death rows. Many prisoners do not receive the medical attention that they may require with many inmates suffering from mental and physical health deterioration while in prison.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo death row prisoners do not have adequate cells or food and medical care does not exist.

In Vietnam many inmates are shackled and can only stand, lay or sit because of the proximity between the shackles and the object it is attached to. This inactivity of an inmate's limbs may lead to loss of muscle tone and loss of use of their limbs.

In the United States of America, the average time on death row is over a decade while a significant number of prisoners have been on death row for more than 20 years. During this time, they are generally isolated from other prisoners, and sharply restricted in terms of visits and exercise, spending as much as 23 hours a day alone in their cells.

According to the Death Penalty Information Center, *“psychologists and lawyers in the United States and elsewhere have argued that protracted periods in the confines of death row can make inmates suicidal, delusional and insane”*.

Some have referred to the living conditions on death row – the bleak isolation and years of uncertainty as to time of execution – as the *“death row phenomenon”*.



« It must be stopped », Poster 4 Tomorrow, Natalia Lazarashvil, Georgie.

- 1 No state** should have the power to takes a citizen's life.
- 2 It is irrevocable:** no justice system is safe from judicial error and innocent people are likely to be sentenced to death.
- 3 It is inefficient:** it has never been shown that the death penalty deters crimes more effectively than other punishments.
- 4 It is unfair:** the death penalty is discriminatory and is often used disproportionately against the poor, the mentally ill, those from racial and ethnic minorities, and in some places in the world because of discrimination because of sexual orientation or religion.
- 5 It does not offer justice to murder victim's families:** the effects of murder cannot be erased by more killing, and the death system prolongs the suffering of victims' families.
- 6 It creates more pain: the death penalty inflicts pain on the families of those on death row.**
- 7 It is inhuman, cruel and degrading:** the dreadful conditions on death row inflict extreme psychological suffering and execution is a physical and mental assault.
- 8 It is applied overwhelmingly in violation of international standards:** it breaches the principles of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to life and that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It is also in contradiction with the international trend towards abolition recognized by three votes at the United Nations General Assembly calling for the establishment of a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty (resolutions 62/149, 63/168 and 65/206 adopted on 18 and 21 December 2007, 2008 and 2010).
- 9 It does not keep society safe: time and money are diverted from other more efficient law enforcement measures**
- 10 It denies any possibility of amendment to the criminal.**

10/10/11



Flash Mob in Paris, October 10, 2010.



Rally in Texas, USA, for the World Day 2010.

10-10-11, take action against the inhumanity of the death penalty!

Dehumanizing Process



The inhumanity of the death penalty is not only in what it does to the inmate facing execution but also in what it does to the rest of us in society. As Renny Cushing, director of Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights (MVFHR), has put it, *"If we let murderers turn us to murder, we become what we say we abhor."*

Around the world, a growing number of family members of murder victims are speaking out against the death penalty, saying that they do not want another killing carried out in their name. These survivors are saying that the response to one human rights violation (the taking of a life through murder) should not be another human rights violation (the taking of a life through execution).

Instead, we should focus on remembering and honoring the victims and working to prevent further violence.

Conditions on death row may change from one country to another, but the dehumanizing process of the death row prisoner is present everywhere.

In Belarus, prisoners sentenced to death are treated as people with no future. Lawyers have reported that their clients were *"treated as if they don't exist"* or *"as if they are no longer human beings"*.

In Japan, between the imposition of a death sentence and the physical execution, people on death row are 'socially extinguished' through the state's severe restrictions on meetings and correspondence. Prisoners are refused communication with their fellow prisoners, and visits with family members and legal representatives are infrequent and closely supervised. No physical contact with family members, friends or even

their attorneys is allowed. Even in the hours before execution, the prisoner is not permitted to see his family or loved ones.

In many Asian governments, information on executions is regarded as a state secret, and even the family of the condemned prisoners will not know when or where their loved ones will be executed. In some countries, families are not allowed to collect the body after the execution.

The families of the prisoners suffer extreme psychological pain from this situation, sometimes not knowing if their relative is alive.

The trial, sentencing, appeals and the wait take its toll on anyone's physical, emotional and mental health.

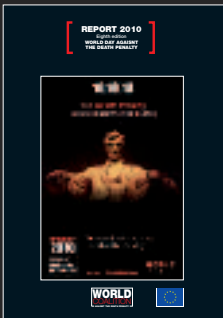
Martina Correia, sister of US death row prisoner Troy Davis, has been going through that emotional roller coaster for years: *"It's not just the inmate who is on death row. That whole family is on death row."* ■

10 things you can do to end the death penalty:

- 1 Sign the petition** calling on retentionist states to establish a moratorium on the use of the death penalty with a view to abolish it on the ground that it is inhumane. This petition will be sent to relevant governments prior to the next moratorium resolution in October 2012.
- 2 Organize a public debate and a movie show** with exonerees, murder victim's families, experts...
- 3 Organize an art exhibition** (photo, drawings, posters) or a theatre play from Dead Man Walking to Victor Hugo.
- 4 Organize a demonstration, a sit-in, a 'die-in', a flash mob...**
- 5 Join the events prepared for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide.**
- 6 Teach abolition** to your friends and relatives.
- 7 Write to a prisoner on death row.**
- 8 Join an abolitionist organization.**
- 9 Mobilize the media** to raise awareness on the issue of the death penalty.
- 10 Participate to the "Cities Against the Death Penalty / Cities for Life" on November 30, 2011.**



"JUSTICE/EDALAT",
Poster 4 Tomorrow,
Aida Torkamani Asl, Iran



To find out more...

Find out everything about the World Day Against the Death Penalty at

www.worldcoalition.org/deathpenalty

and in particular:

- The poster of the 2011 World Day
- The mobilisation kit
- Detailed factsheet on the death penalty around the world
- Factsheet on the international jurisprudence on the inhumanity of the death penalty
- The 2010 World Day Reports includes hundreds of examples of initiatives
- The pedagogical guide and the capital punishment curriculum

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

Created in Rome in May 2002, the World Coalition brings together over 120 bar associations, trade unions, local governments and non-governmental organizations. It aims at strengthening the international dimension of the fight against the death penalty and contributing to putting an end to death sentences and executions.

In 2003, the World Coalition established the World Day Against the Death Penalty on 10 October. This event is followed all over the world and especially in countries that continue to use the death penalty.



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