



**INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN  
TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY**

**PRESS KIT**



# A FRENCH COMMITMENT

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The death penalty is not justice, it is a failure of justice. The death penalty is not a useful instrument for fighting crime. The loss of human life it entails is irreparable, and no legal system is immune from miscarriages of justice. Resorting to the death penalty is not a mere instrument of criminal policy, it is a violation of human rights.

Just as, in every country, committed people exist whose names are associated with a cause, so too do states exist which are committed to universal struggles within the community of nations. Everyone knows how much the abolition of the death penalty owes to the determination of Victor Hugo, Albert Camus and Robert Badinter. Today, France occupies a special and recognized position among the main states committed to fighting the death penalty.

The abolition of the death penalty is a highly symbolic cause which reminds us of the universal nature of human rights. Support for abolition is making progress on all continents, independently of the type of political regime, level of development and cultural heritage.

**Laurent Fabius, Minister of Foreign Affairs, has decided to further this struggle by actively engaging French diplomacy worldwide in a campaign to abolish the death penalty.**

**On the ground, each French embassy is mobilized:**

- through general approaches or through efforts relating to individual cases, in order to reaffirm France's opposition to the death penalty, everywhere and under all circumstances.
- by organizing events, conferences, film screenings and debates wherever capital punishment is still implemented, in order to further the campaign and support the players committed to the cause of abolition.

**France's efforts complement those of civil society.**

Our action everywhere is complementary to that of the foundations and NGOs involved in combating the death penalty. By setting as her target the global abolition of the death penalty – not just a moratorium on it – France is demonstrating high aspirations for human rights in her foreign policy.

**Engaged in the United Nations : supporting the GA resolution on a universal moratorium and the Human Rights Council.**

Within the United Nations, alongside the EU France promotes the adoption of the General Assembly resolution calling for the introduction of a global moratorium on the death penalty. At the Human Rights Council, France is seizing every opportunity to encourage all states which implement the death penalty to abolish it.



# LAUNCH OF THE CAMPAIGN

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## **27 September, United Nations General Assembly LAUNCH OF AN INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR ABOLITION**

On France's initiative, an event brought together representatives of dozens of states and of civil society, in New York on the sidelines of the ministerial week. The theme of the event was "*The death penalty: from moratorium to abolition*".

Jointly organized with the Republic of Benin, which has just abolished it, and ahead of the General Assembly's examination of the resolution on establishing a moratorium, the meeting was an opportunity to hold talks and lay the foundations for a global coalition of states in favour of abolition.

## **9 October, Quai d'Orsay WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY: CURTAIN RAISER**

On the eve of the World Day Against the Death Penalty, which is held on 10 October each year, France brought together at the Quai d'Orsay players and defenders in abolition from all over the world.

Secretary General addressed a video message to launch the event before the workshops that were held in rooms of the Quai d'Orsay. It was an opportunity for discussions between French and international NGOs, diplomats working on the ground and condemned people's lawyers from several countries.

**Olivier Py** read extracts of *The Last Day of a Condemned Man*.

**Laurent Fabius, Minister of Foreign Affairs**, concluded the event alongside Christiane Taubira and Robert Badinter



## OUR DIPLOMATIC NETWORK'S ACTIVE ROLE

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**Our entire diplomatic network is actively engaged in the campaign.**

At the end of the summer, during the Ambassadors' Conference in Paris, Laurent Fabius launched a comprehensive mobilization of our diplomatic, consular and cultural network.

**Embassies situated in countries that have not yet abolished the death penalty have been called upon, depending on local opportunities and contexts, to issue statements, organize events and take steps vis-à-vis the authorities to make progress towards the goal of abolition.**

Dozens of initiatives will be launched this year, particularly around the World Day Against the Death Penalty on 10 October. Examples of this unprecedented mobilization will be presented at the Quai d'Orsay during the meetings of 9 October: in Minsk, Nouakchott, Rangoon, Havana and Tokyo, but also at the United Nations in Geneva, where the Human Rights Council meets, our embassies are preparing events and deploying the full range of our influence and advocacy tools to spark debate and reflexion and emphasize the need for abolition.



## ANNEX: THE DEATH PENALTY WORLDWIDE

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The fight against the death penalty is a long-term struggle in which tangible progress is made every year in all the world's regions. A downward trend has been noted in the number of death sentences and executions worldwide. In the past 20 years, more than 50 states have outlawed the death penalty.

In 1981, France became the 36th state to abandon this cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. In 2007, she ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Adopted by the United Nations in 1989, the Protocol is the first instrument of global reach to assert that abolishing the death penalty helps promote human dignity and the progressive development of human rights. On 5 July 2012, the Republic of Benin abolished the death penalty by adhering to the Optional Protocol. More than 100 states worldwide have taken the decisive and irreversible step from the moratorium observed for the past several years to outlawing the death penalty.

**- A downward trend has been noted in the number of death sentences and executions worldwide. In the past 20 years, more than 50 states have outlawed the death penalty.**

**- To date, 99 states have abolished the death penalty for all crimes, eight have abolished it for ordinary crimes and 33 are observing moratoriums on executions – making a total of 140 states<sup>1</sup>.**

**- However, the death penalty is still applied in 57 states and territories.**

**Since 2011, 23 states have carried out executions<sup>1</sup>.** While the number of countries carrying out executions is in decline, the latest report by Amnesty International gave a figure of 676 executions in 2011, as compared with 527 in 2010, which shows that the number of executions is increasing in the hard core of retentionist countries: basically Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq. Moreover, the real figure is hard to ascertain in the absence of official statistics in certain states, including China. As for the number of sentences, it has fallen from 2,024 in 2010 to 1,923 in 2011.

**- Every year, new countries abolish the death penalty:**

- Mongolia and Benin ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, in 2012.
- Latvia abolished the death penalty for all crimes in January 2012.
- Honduras and the Dominican Republic ratified the additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights to Abolish the Death Penalty in November 2011 and January 2012 respectively.
- In the United States, Illinois and Connecticut became the 16th and 17th states to abolish capital punishment, in March 2011 and April 2012 respectively.

### NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

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Despite the hopes raised by the Arab Spring, **none of the 22 states in the region have abolished the death penalty.** In 2011, at least 558 executions were recorded in eight countries (Saudi Arabia, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Yemen), including **several hundred in Iran, 68 in Iraq and at least 82 in Saudi Arabia, a trend which has continued in 2012.** No information is available on the use of the death penalty in Libya in 2011, but many reports cite extrajudicial executions by all the parties in the conflict. The other countries have observed de facto moratoriums for several years (Tunisia since 1991, Morocco and Algeria since 1993, Lebanon since 2004 and Jordan since 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> The states counted are not all members of the United Nations – among others, the Cook Islands, the Vatican and Niue – hence the total figure of more than 193.

<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Belarus, China, North Korea, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Gambia, Iraq, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, the Palestinian Authority, Singapore, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Taiwan, Vietnam and Yemen.

### ASIA

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**Mongolia abolished the death penalty in March 2012**, thus joining Nepal, East Timor, the Philippines and Cambodia as abolitionist states in the region. **Several states have observed de facto moratoriums for several years** (the Maldives since 1952, Sri Lanka since 1976, Burma since 1988, Laos since 1989, South Korea since 1997, India since 2004). Pakistan has now had a moratorium in force since 2009.

**In 2011, eight states carried out executions** – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, North Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam – but 18 states issued death sentences. In the absence of official data, it is estimated that there are several thousand executions a year in China. On 29 March 2012, Japan broke a de facto moratorium observed for a year and a half, by hanging three condemned people. The country carried out more executions in August 2012.

## THE AMERICAS AND CARIBBEAN

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**A large majority of the American continent is abolitionist.** In 2011 and to date, the **United States** has been the only country in the continent to carry out executions. However, positive results can be seen, with the abolition of the death penalty in Illinois and Connecticut and the introduction of a moratorium in Oregon.

In the rest of the continent, **Belize, Cuba, Jamaica, Guatemala, Guyana, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago** and most of the English-speaking Caribbean islands have failed to abolish the death penalty. However, the Commonwealth countries observe a de facto moratorium, following the judgement of the Privy Council in the Pratt and Morgan case, whereby the implementation of the death penalty more than five years after the sentence constitutes cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

The **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights** opposes the death penalty and frequently speaks out against executions in the United States.

## AFRICA

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Seventeen out of 48 states have outlawed the death penalty and a positive trend has been noted in recent years. In 2009, Togo and Burundi joined the abolitionist states. Benin abolished the death penalty in June 2012 and the Democratic Republic of Congo decided in March 2012 on an “irreversible moratorium” and “gradual abolition”. Bucking this positive trend, Botswana and Gambia carried out executions in 2012.

The **African Commission on Human and People’s Rights** called for the abolition of the death penalty at its 49th session in 2011.

## EASTERN EUROPE

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Belarus remains the only state on the European continent not to have abolished capital punishment. Four people have been executed there since 2011, two of them in March 2012. **Russia** introduced a moratorium on executions in 1996.

In Europe, **Protocols 6 and 13 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms** also ban the death penalty in times of peace and war.

