

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MEDIA BRIEFING

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DEATH PENALTY 2012: FACTS AND FIGURES

GLOBAL FIGURES

At least **682 people** were **executed** in **21 countries** in 2012. In 2011, Amnesty International reported 680 executions in 21 countries worldwide.

Most executions took place in **China, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, USA** and **Yemen** – in that order.

China executed more people than the rest of the world put together – but the true extent of the use of the death penalty in China is unknown as data is considered a state secret, and the figure of 682 excludes thousands of executions carried out in China.

In **Iraq**, there was a stark rise in the use of the death penalty – at least 129 people were executed, almost double the 2011 figure of at least 68.

During 2012, **only 21 countries, about one in 10, carried out executions** – the same number as in 2011, but down by a quarter from a decade ago (28 countries executed in 2003).

140 countries worldwide, more than two-thirds, are **abolitionist** in law or practice.

On 20 December, **111 Member States** of the United Nations voted in favour of the fourth UN General Assembly resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

Commutations or **pardons** of death sentences were recorded in 27 countries in 2012 - down from 33 in 2011.

At least **1,722 death sentences** were imposed in **58 countries** – down from 1,923 in 63 countries in 2011.

At least **23,286 people** were on **death row** at the end of 2012.

In 2012, some countries that had not used the death penalty for long periods carried out executions, for example **Pakistan** (first execution in more than four years), **India** (first execution in more than eight years), and **Gambia** (first execution in almost three decades).

The following **methods of execution** were used across the world: beheading, hanging, lethal injection and shooting.

At least two people were executed in Yemen for crimes that were committed when they were **under 18 years of age**, in violation of international law.

In the majority of countries where people were sentenced to death or executed, the proceedings did not meet international **fair trial** standards. In some countries this included the **extraction of 'confessions' through torture** or other ill-treatment, for example in Afghanistan, Belarus, China, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan.

In **Belarus** and **Japan**, prisoners were not informed of their forthcoming execution, nor were their lawyers and families. In **Belarus** and **Botswana**, the bodies of executed prisoners were not returned to their families for burial.

Public executions were known to have been carried out in Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Somalia.

People continued to face the death penalty for offences that do not meet the “most serious crimes” threshold of “involving intentional killing” as defined in international law, including for drug-related crimes in a number of countries, as well as “adultery” and “sodomy” (Iran), “blasphemy” (Pakistan), economic crimes (China) and rape (Saudi Arabia).

ASIA-PACIFIC

At least 38 executions were carried out in eight countries in the region. This figure does not include the thousands of executions that are believed to have been carried out in **China**, which executed more people than the rest of the world put together. But the true extent of the use of the death penalty in China is unknown as data is a state secret.

India carried out its first execution in more than eight years in November, when the lone surviving gunman from the 2008 Mumbai attacks was hanged.

Pakistan carried out the first execution in more than four years, while **Afghanistan** and **Japan** resumed executions after seventeen and eighteen months, respectively.

Viet Nam did not implement any death sentences in 2012, while **Singapore** observed a moratorium on the death penalty while considering legal amendments to its death penalty laws.

Mongolia on 13 March acceded to a key UN treaty aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

AFRICA

At least 40 executions were carried out in five countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

In August, nine people were put to death in **Gambia** on one day – the first executions there in almost three decades.

At least 19 executions were reported in **Sudan** in 2012. At least 199 death sentences were known to have been imposed.

Benin on 5 July acceded to a key UN treaty aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. **Madagascar** signed the same treaty on 24 September, but has not yet ratified it.

The government of **Ghana** accepted recommendations towards abolishing the death penalty in its new Constitution.

Unlike in 2011, no death sentences were imposed in **Burkina Faso**, **Malawi** or **Sierra Leone**. Following pardons in April, no person is on death row in **Sierra Leone**.

AMERICAS

The **USA** was the only country in the region to carry out executions, 43 in 2012 (the same figure as in 2011). Only nine states executed in 2012, compared to 13 in 2011. In April, Connecticut became the 17th abolitionist US state.

With the exception of 12 death sentences imposed in three countries (Barbados, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago), **Central and Southern America** and **the Caribbean** were death penalty-free in 2012.

Guatemala commuted 53 death sentences in 2012 after a review by the Supreme Court of all death row prisoners' cases.

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Belarus continued to be the only country in the region to carry out executions, and did so under strict secrecy. At least three men were executed in 2012.

Latvia fully abolished the death penalty on 1 January 2012, becoming the 97th country in the world to do so.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

At least 557 executions were carried out in six countries in the region. **Iran**, **Iraq**, **Saudi Arabia** and **Yemen** alone account for 99 per cent of all confirmed executions in the region.

It could not be confirmed if executions took place in **Egypt** or **Syria**.

Iraq saw an alarming increase in the use of the death penalty – at least 129 people were executed, almost double the 2011 figure of at least 68.

In **Tunisia**, 125 people on death row had their sentences commuted. However, the country's proposed draft Constitution did not rule out the death penalty.

ENDS
