

# **EUROPEAN AND WORLD DAY AGAINST DEATH PENALTY**

## **PUBLIC DEBATE ON 'DEATH PENALTY'**

**PRESS SYNDICATE – 10 OCTOBER 2011**

### **SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR ANGELINA EICHHORST, HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO LEBANON**

Excellencies Members of Parliament,  
Representatives of Government,  
President of the Press Syndicate,  
Human Rights Defenders,  
Representatives of Non Governmental Organisations,  
Ambassadors and representatives of European Union Members States,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union is a union of peoples, cultures and values. The Lisbon Treaty tells us very clearly that "the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities".

Expanding on this the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights requires that the inviolability of human dignity must be respected and protected. Accordingly we recognise that everyone has the right to life – and "no one shall be condemned to the death penalty".

In the EU the use of the death penalty is outlawed in all cases. No execution has occurred within the territory of the EU member states in the past 14 years.

The abolition of the death penalty is also prerequisite for EU membership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many people ask why the European Union firmly rejects the use of the death penalty in all circumstances. Let us be clear: Executions are inhumane, they are violations of human dignity. There is no evidence that the threat of execution deters people from committing crimes. The possibility always remains, even with the most water-tight legal system, for a miscarriage of justice that ends up in the execution of an innocent person. Once an execution has been carried out, there is no reprieve.

The EU and the Member States work jointly both at the international level and in-country to encourage the abolition of the death penalty. The EU and the Member States are also the most prominent international supporters of abolitionist projects worldwide. Since 1994 the European Commission has funded over 50 such projects worldwide, with an overall budget of €33 million. An example of one of these is the regional project entitled "Life is a Right" funded through the European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy and represented by ALEF in Lebanon. Through this, young volunteers are encouraged to participate in research, advocacy and awareness-raising activities that promote the abolition of the death penalty.

*The Tenth of October, the European and World Day against the Death Penalty* gives a chance for us all to remind ourselves that "one execution is one execution too many and that one death sentence is one death sentence too many". 58 countries still allow for the death penalty. Lebanon should no longer be part of these.

For Lebanon, the *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty which has existed since 2004, is simply insufficient. Short of a complete abolition, at least a legal moratorium should be applied.

It is true that Lebanon has agreed to put the abolition of the death penalty officially on our political dialogue agenda, in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the Association Agreement. Indeed, in 2010, Lebanon committed to maintaining the *de facto* moratorium and to take further steps to reach a national consensus on abolition. In the past we specifically discussed Lebanon's accession to the Second Optional Protocol of International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights that aims at the abolition of the death penalty. We encourage again the Lebanese state to accede to this protocol.

To Lebanese lawmakers and politicians, including those present here today, we say: take the abolition of the death penalty close to your hearts and your agendas. Just put it on top of your to-do lists and cross it off for the next session. Do away with the death penalty it is no longer of our time.

Thank you.