

Joint Declaration by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, on behalf of the EU, and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, on the European and World Day against the Death Penalty, 10 October 2016

Today, on the European and World Day against the Death Penalty, the Council of Europe and the European Union reaffirm their strong and unequivocal opposition to capital punishment in all circumstances and for all cases. The death penalty is incompatible with human dignity. It is inhuman and degrading treatment, does not have any proven significant deterrent effect, and allows judicial errors to become irreversible and fatal.

Abolition of the death penalty is a distinctive achievement in Europe. It is a prerequisite for membership in the Council of Europe, and the absolute ban of the death penalty under all circumstances is inscribed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The Council of Europe and the European Union urge all European States to ratify the protocols to the European Convention on Human Rights, which aim at the abolition of the death penalty.

The Council of Europe and the European Union strongly urge the political leadership of all European countries to ensure compliance with the legal and political obligations arising from the membership in the Council of Europe and the European Union.

The Council of Europe and the European Union deplore the continuing use of the death penalty in Belarus, the only country on the European continent that still applies the death penalty. They strongly urge the authorities of Belarus to commute the remaining death sentences and establish without delay a formal moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition of the death penalty. The introduction of the moratorium would be a decisive step in bringing Belarus closer to the pan-European legal standards.

The Council of Europe and the European Union welcome the global trend towards the abolition of capital punishment. Today more than two thirds of all countries have abolished the death penalty in either law or practice. However, the Council of Europe and the European Union regret that the number of executions have risen in some of those countries that retain the death penalty and that some countries which had a de facto moratorium carried out executions. Both Organisations are particularly alarmed when this involves the execution of minors, which is contrary to international law. Some countries continue to apply the death penalty for drug related offences, also in violation of international law.

In June of this year, the 6th World Congress on the Abolition of the Death Penalty took place in Oslo. All participating countries and organisations united behind the call for a global moratorium on the death penalty.

The Council of Europe and the European Union hope to see the momentum created by the World Congress reflected in an increased number of countries supporting the Resolution on a Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty which will be put to vote at the 71st session of the UN General Assembly in December 2016.
