Death penalty: key facts about the situation in Europe and the rest of the world

Parliament strongly opposes capital punishment and pushes for its worldwide abolition. Find out more in our infographics.
Capital punishment: facts and figures

By 2017, 142 countries had abolished the death penalty in law or practice, leaving 56 countries still using capital punishment. There were at least 993 recorded executions in 23 countries.
(excluding China, where thousands of executions are believed to have been carried out), with more than 20,000 people on death row.

Some 84% of all recorded executions in 2017 took place in four countries: Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Pakistan. Figures are unknown for China, since this data is a state secret. *(Source Amnesty International)*

There is strong opposition to abolishing the death penalty in Asia, the Arab World and the US. However, four fifths of the 55 African countries have abolished capital punishment or operate moratoriums.
How the EU fights the death penalty

As part of its commitment to defending human rights, the EU is the largest donor in the fight against death penalty worldwide. All EU countries have abolished the death penalty in line with
the European Convention on Human Rights.

The EU fights to abolish the death penalty in a number of ways:

- It prohibits trade in goods that can be used for torture and execution
- It uses trade policy to encourage compliance with human rights
- It supports civil society organisations in countries with the death penalty that raise awareness, monitor and document the situation
- As a permanent observer in the UN, it is a vocal supporter of any measures to end the death penalty

In addition the European Parliament adopts resolutions and hosts debates condemning the actions of countries that still use capital punishment. A 2015 resolution on the death penalty condemned its use to suppress opposition, or on grounds of religious belief, homosexuality or adultery.

Belarus is the only country in Europe that continues to carry out executions. There is a moratorium in Russia.

"Capital punishment is the most premeditated of murders."

Albert Camus

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**Briefings**

The EU's fight against the death penalty
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its relevance for the EU