

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 2021 DEATH PENALTY REPORT LAUNCH

PRESS BRIEFING

The Board Chair of Amnesty International Ghana, Board members of Amnesty International Ghana, Death Penalty stakeholders, Diplomatic Community, The Ghana Police service, The Ghana prison service, members of the Press, Staff and members of Amnesty International Ghana, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, we are happy to have you all here to witness the launch of Amnesty International's 2021 Death Penalty Report.

This report covers the judicial use of the death penalty for the period January 2021 to December 2021. As in previous years, information is collected from a variety of sources including official figures, court, judges, information from individuals sentenced to death and their families and representatives, media reports and other civil society organizations. Amnesty international reports only on executions, death sentences and other aspects of the use of the death penalty such as commutations and exonerations

The death sentence and executions report which Amnesty International publishes every year, highlights the plight of people put on death row by their governments and seeks ways of organizing a conscious effort to abolish the

death penalty in the world. Globally, there was an almost 40% increase in the number of death sentences from at least 1,477 in 2020 to 2,052 in 2021.

Amnesty International death sentences and execution 2021 report indicates that, there was a total of 165 people known to be on death row in Ghana. The Director of Prisons informed Amnesty International that no executions took place in the country. Seven people were sentenced to death and 165 were under death sentence at the end of the year 2021, while six of them were women and six foreigners. There were no commutations or pardons. Amnesty international understands that all 165 were convicted of murder, which remains punishable by a mandatory death penalty in Ghana, barring judges from considering specific circumstances that may have mitigatory effect in each case

A private member's bill proposed to Ghana's Parliament in June by Hon. Francis-Xavier Sosu, the member of Parliament for Madina, provides for the abolition of the death penalty as a first step from the country's Criminal Offences Act 29 and Armed Forces Act 105. At the end of the year the proposed bill was being prepared for a first reading with discussions ongoing to expand it to cover provisions in the Armed Forces Act that impose the death penalty.

Ghana belongs to the global community of which more than half (i.e., two-thirds of the community), have abolished the death penalty outright. The abolishing of the death penalty will in no small way enhance Ghana's Human Rights credentials among its peers. In West Africa, where Ghana is considered as a pacesetter in human rights, rule of Law and good governance, death penalty abolition has directly affected our ranking with countries such Togo who abolished the death penalty in 2009, Gabon in 2010, Benin in 2012, Guinea in 2016 for ordinary crimes and 2017 for military crimes, Burkina Faso in 2018, and recently Sierra Leone in 2021.

“2021 saw a worrying rise in executions and death sentences worldwide, as some of the world’s most prolific executioners returned to business as usual and courts were unshackled from Covid-19 restrictions”, according to the Amnesty International’s annual Death Penalty Report 2021.

Despite these alarming developments, positive signs of a global trend toward abolition continued throughout 2021. For the second consecutive year, the number of countries known to have executed people was the lowest since Amnesty International began keeping records.

In Sierra Leone, an Act which abolishes the death penalty for all crimes was unanimously adopted by Parliament in July 2021, although it is yet to come into effect. In December 2021, Kazakhstan adopted legislation to abolish the death penalty for all crimes, which came into effect in January 2022. The Government of Papua New Guinea embarked on a national consultation on the death penalty, which resulted in the adoption of an abolition bill in January 2022, which is yet to come into force. At the end of the year, the Government of Malaysia announced that it would table legislative reforms on the death penalty in the third quarter of 2022. And, in Central African Republic and Ghana, lawmakers started legislative processes to abolish the death penalty, which remain ongoing.

Amnesty International’s vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other international human rights instruments. In pursuit of this vision, Amnesty International undertakes research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of these rights.

As a Human Rights Organization, we recognize that Chapter 5 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana establishes fundamental rights and freedoms which shall be respected and upheld by the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary and all other departments and agencies of Government.

We recognize that there have been considerable improvements in the human rights situation in Ghana since 1992 through the implementation of national laws and international instruments with the support and contributions of Civil Society Organizations, Coalitions, and individuals. However, there remain several human rights concerns such as police brutality, impunity, environmental degradation leading to climate crises, sexual and gender-based violence all of which require the immediate action of the State.

We call on the state and its institutions to take a critical look at the issues raised in this report and address them accordingly.

Amnesty International Ghana looks forward to engaging with the State, CSOs and media regularly to support in setting the human rights agenda for awareness-raising, public education, and urgent action as our collective contribution to making our country and the world a better place for all without discrimination.

Amnesty International Ghana will continue to work with the Government of Ghana towards the total abolishment of capital punishment. We take cognizance of our neighboring countries like Burkina Faso, Gambia, Senegal, Benin, Sierra Leone that have successfully abolished the death penalty and encourage Ghana to do same.

In Ghana, the last execution was carried out in 1993. Prison conditions continue to remain deplorable while some prisoners on death row suffer mental health issues from being on death row not knowing when they will be killed.

Amnesty international opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature of circumstances of the crime.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, let us all stand together to abolish the death penalty in Ghana.

Thank you very much for your kind attention and support.

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