

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MEDIA BRIEFING

## Death penalty in 2018: Facts and figures

### Global figures

Amnesty International recorded at least **690 executions** in **20 countries** in 2018, a decrease of **31%** compared to 2017 (at least **993**). This figure represents the lowest number of executions that Amnesty International has recorded in the past decade.

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

**China remained the world's leading executioner** – but the true extent of the use of the death penalty in China is unknown as this data is classified as a state secret; the global figure of at least **690** excludes the thousands of executions believed to have been carried out in China.

The authorities of **Viet Nam** indicated in November that **85 executions** had been carried out during 2018, placing the country among the world's **top five** executioners.

Excluding China, **78%** of all reported executions took place in just four countries – **Iran, Saudi Arabia, Viet Nam and Iraq**.

**Botswana, Sudan, Taiwan** and **Thailand** all resumed executions last year. Amnesty International did not report any executions in **Bahrain, Bangladesh, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Palestine (State of)** and **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, despite having done so in 2017.

Executions in **Iran** dropped from at least **507** in 2017 to at least **253** in 2018 – a decrease of 50%. Executions in **Iraq** decreased from at least **125** in 2017 to at least **52** in 2018, while in Pakistan, executions fell from at least **60** in 2017 to at least **14** in 2018. Somalia halved its executions, down from **24** in 2017 to **13** in 2018.

[Burkina Faso](#) abolished the death penalty in its new penal code in June. In February and July respectively, [Gambia](#) and [Malaysia](#) both declared an official moratorium on executions. In the US, the death penalty statute in the state of [Washington](#) was declared unconstitutional in October.

At the end of 2018, **106** countries (a majority of the world's states) had abolished the death penalty in law for all crimes, and **142** countries (more than two-thirds) had abolished the death penalty in law or practice.

Amnesty International recorded commutations or pardons of death sentences in **29 countries**: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Botswana, China, Egypt, Guyana, India, Iran, Kuwait, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco/Western Sahara, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, South Korea, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, UAE, USA and Zimbabwe.

**Eight** exonerations of prisoners under sentence of death were recorded in four countries: **Egypt, Kuwait, Malawi** and **USA**.

Amnesty International recorded at least **2,531** death sentences in **54 countries**, a slight decrease from the total of **2,591** reported in **2017**.

At least **19,336** people were known to be under sentence of death globally at the end of 2018.

The following methods of execution were used across the world in 2018: **beheading, electrocution, hanging, lethal injection and shooting**. Two new death sentences by stoning were known to have been imposed in Iran.

Reports from 2018 indicated **seven** people were executed in Iran for crimes committed when they were younger than 18 years of age.

At least **98 executions** were known to have been carried out for drug-related offences in **4 countries** – 14% of the global total and down from 28% in 2017. At least 226 of such death sentences were known to have been imposed in 14 countries.

Death sentences were known to have been imposed after proceedings that did not meet international fair trial standards in countries including Bangladesh, Belarus, China, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Viet Nam.

### **Regional analysis**

#### **Americas**

For the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the **USA** remained the only country to carry out executions in the region.

The number of executions (**25**) and death sentences (**45**) reported in the US slightly increased compared to 2017.

The state of Texas nearly doubled its figure compared to 2017 (from **7 to 13**), accounting for just over half of the country's total. Nebraska carried out its first execution since 1997; South Dakota since 2012; and Tennessee since 2009.

Only **two countries**, USA and Guyana, imposed death sentences – the lowest recorded number since Amnesty International began keeping records in 1979.

The death penalty statute in the US state of Washington was declared unconstitutional in October.

#### **Asia-Pacific**

At least **136 executions** in **nine countries** were known to have been carried out throughout the region in 2018, compared to at least **93 in 2017**. This increase was mostly due to the rare disclosure of a figure from the authorities of Viet Nam. It does not include the thousands of executions that Amnesty International believed were carried out in China.

Thailand resumed executions for the first time since 2009.

Japan more than tripled its annual figure (from **4 to 15**), after the hanging of 13 men involved in a high-profile case, which saw a deadly Sarin chemical attack on the Tokyo underground in 1995.

**Singapore** reported 13 executions, the first time since 2003 that its execution total reached a double-digit figure.

Pakistan reported a drop of **77% drop in executions**, from **60** in 2017 to at least **14** in 2018.

Malaysia announced a moratorium on executions and a review of its death penalty laws.

At least **1,100** new death sentences across **17 countries** were known to have been imposed, a slight increase from the total of **1,037** recorded the previous year.

### **Europe and Central Asia**

At least **four executions** were recorded in Belarus in 2018, compared to **two in 2017**. The last time another country in the region carried out executions was in 2005.

**Kazakhstan**, the **Russian Federation** and **Tajikistan** continued to observe moratoriums on executions.

### **Middle East and North Africa**

The number of executions recorded by Amnesty International in the Middle East and North Africa region dropped by **41%**, from **847** in 2017 to **501** in 2018, the lowest number of executions recorded in the region.

**Five** countries – **Egypt**, **Iran**, **Iraq**, **Saudi Arabia** and **Yemen** – were known to have carried out executions, a **50% drop** in executing countries.

**Iran**, **Saudi Arabia** and **Iraq** remained the top executing countries in the region, carrying out at least **454 recorded executions** between them, **91%** of the total number in the whole of the region.

There were **1,170 recorded death sentences** in 2018, marking an **89% increase** compared to 2017, when 619 death sentences were recorded. **Egypt** imposed the highest number of confirmed death sentences in the region with at least **717** people sentenced to death compared to at least **402** in 2017.

### **Sub-Saharan Africa**

Four countries – **Botswana**, **Somalia**, **South Sudan** and **Sudan** – carried out executions in 2018.

A drop in recorded executions in Somalia drove an overall decrease in the region, from **28** in 2017 to **24** in 2018, despite an alarming increase in executions in South Sudan.

Recorded death sentences reduced from at least **878** in 2017 to at least **212** in 2018.

The number of countries that imposed death sentences increased to **17** from **15** recorded in 2017.

**Burkina Faso** abolished the death penalty for ordinary crimes only, and **Gambia** established a moratorium on executions and ratified an international treaty committing it to abolishing the death penalty.

### **ENDS**

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