

Declaration by the Youth Ambassadors for the Abolition of the Death Penalty on the occasion of the European and World Day against the Death Penalty

10/10/2025

We, the Youth Ambassadors for the Abolition of the Death Penalty, stand united in calling for the universal abolition of the death penalty. In a time of pressing global challenges, we reaffirm that justice, human rights, and equality are non-negotiable foundations of our society. The death penalty protects no one – not society, not victims, not the marginalised or vulnerable – and has no place in a modern justice system. This is why the theme for this year’s European and World Day Against the Death Penalty, “*The Death Penalty Protects No One*”, is more relevant than ever.

We recall that on 17 December 2024, 130 UN member States – more than two-thirds of the membership – adopted the tenth resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, with the **highest number of votes since 2007**¹. This progress, though positive, still faces a troubling reality. In 2024, the global use of the death penalty reached **1,518 recorded executions**, marking a **32% increase from 2023**. This was the highest rise since 2015, despite a record low in the number of countries that apply the death penalty². Amid our concerns, we remain hopeful. We welcome Zimbabwe’s historic step of enacting the Death Penalty Abolition Act on 31 December 2024, abolishing capital punishment, and becoming the 30th African State to abolish the death penalty.

These developments provide proof that despite setbacks, the international momentum towards universal abolition is resilient. Looking ahead to the **9th World Congress Against the Death Penalty in 2026**, we see a historic opportunity to strengthen the international abolitionist movement and advance the universal recognition that the death penalty protects no one. We call upon abolitionist States to intensify their abolitionist efforts, support the UN moratorium, and work collectively until the universal abolition of the death penalty becomes a tangible reality. We also call upon abolitionist *de facto* States to lead by example and take the final step in abolishing the death penalty³.

In asserting that the death penalty protects no one, we recall that research conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime demonstrates that abolition does not lead to increased crime rates.⁴ The data reinforces that justice is best affirmed through fair and humane criminal justice systems, rather than through state-imposed executions. Moreover, capital punishment continuously and disproportionately targets marginalised and vulnerable groups, including ethnic and religious minorities and people in low-income communities. We would also like to deplore that in some countries, LGBTIQ+ community is particularly targeted. Taken together, this evidence underscores that the death penalty fails as a deterrent, deepens systemic inequalities, and perpetuates cycles of violence – ultimately protecting no one.

We, as a diverse group of youth advocates for the abolition of death penalty, stand united in building a future where justice is grounded in dignity, integrity, and rehabilitation – rather than retribution. We reiterate that the death penalty protects no one and that societies should prioritise prevention, fairness, and protection for all over punitive vengeance.

¹Amnesty International, *UN Member States move closer to rejecting death penalty as lawful punishment under international law* (18 December 2024).

²Amnesty International, *Recorded Executions hit their highest figure since 2015* (8 April 2025).

³Death Penalty Research Unit and The Death Penalty Project, *Between retention and abolition : making sense of a death penalty without executions* (24 September 2025).

⁴The Death Penalty Project, *Deterrence and the Death Penalty* (1 November 2022).

By writing this declaration, we aim to:

- **Raise awareness of the moral, legal, and human rights implications of the death penalty:** We aim to inform and engage both policymakers and the public about the realities and consequences of capital punishment;
- **Promote and protect human rights, emphasising a justice system based on dignity, fairness, and rehabilitation:** Abolishing the death penalty is a fundamental step in protecting the right to life, preventing torture, establishing justice systems free from discrimination and error;
- **Demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the death penalty as a means of ensuring security and justice:** We strive to challenge myths surrounding capital punishment, with particular focus on claims about its deterrent effect, by highlighting the evidence proving it does not prevent crime;
- **Achieve permanent and universal abolition:** We are strongly committed to advancing the complete abolition of the death penalty universally, ensuring that this inhumane practice becomes only a part of history.

We call upon governments, civil society, and international institutions to:

- Advocate for the universal abolition of the death penalty;
- Engage with youth advocates to raise awareness and counter the resurgence of pro-death penalty narratives among younger generations;
- Issue a call to action to partner organisations and civil society to unite in supporting the universal abolition of the death penalty and actively endorse the UN moratorium;
- Promote education and training initiatives that highlight the inherent cruelty and injustice of the death penalty and demonstrate that capital punishment protects no one.

We call upon non-abolitionist States to:

- Guarantee transparency by publishing accurate data on death row and executions when carried out;
- Stop sentencing people to death and immediately halt all executions;
- Legally abolish the death penalty by ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Join the global abolitionist movement and progress by voting in favour of the UN moratorium.

On this 23rd European and World Day Against the Death Penalty, we declare our unwavering hope and determination to build a just and equitable world free from capital punishment. Ours can be the generation that ends this cycle of violence, for the death penalty protects no one – not victims, not communities, not people in low-income communities, not women, not the LGBTIQ+ community, not the innocents, not anyone – and together, we will ensure it is consigned to history.