

Joint Declaration by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the European and World Day against the Death Penalty, 10 October 2015

Joint Declaration by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, on the European and World Day against the Death Penalty, 10 October 2015

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

No execution has been carried out in our member states for eighteen years. 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 deplore the continuing use of the death penalty in Belarus. 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 Council of Europe and the European Union note with concern that the number of executions of persons for drug offences has increased during the last year in the few states that apply the death penalty to those offences. Both Organisations are particularly alarmed when this involves the execution of minors, which is contrary to international law. It is all the closer to heart because some European citizens have been executed in 2015 and others are still on death row for drug-related offences.

The Council of Europe and the European Union welcome the Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty adopted on 18 December 2014. With an increasing number of votes in favour of that resolution compared to the previous four resolutions of this kind, and with almost two thirds of countries in the world having abolished the death penalty in either law or practice, there exists now a clear global trend towards the abolition of capital punishment.