1571st meeting, 7 October 2026

4.1 Abolition of the death penalty – Thematic discussion

Reference documents

CM/Del/Dec(2001)769/4.4, CM/Del/Dec(2026)1555/4.1

Decisions

The Deputies

1. reaffirmed their unequivocal opposition to the death penalty, including any reintroduction of it, in all places and in all circumstances, and reiterated the Council of Europe's aim to create a death penalty-free zone in Europe and beyond, and to pursue the fight against its reintroduction and in favour of its universal abolition, in line with the Reykjavík Declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government on 17 May 2023; underlined that 2027 will mark the 30th anniversary without any execution in the 46 Council of Europe member States;

2. welcomed the continued global trend towards the abolition of the death penalty but deeply deplored the reported alarming global rise in executions, which is due to a small number of countries, in particular Iran, where the death penalty has been used as a tool for intimidation of the population and where executions of protesters have continued;

3. reiterated their concern that, even in countries where the death penalty has been abolished, the abolitionist cause might be undermined by the instrumentalisation of a growing feeling of insecurity among the population and that political proposals and debates arise on the possibility of reintroducing the death penalty; recalled that there is no conclusive evidence of the deterrent value of the death penalty, and called on member States to stand firm in their commitment to oppose it, in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights;

4. took note of the theme of the European and World Day against the death penalty in 2026 which is focusing on the stories of persons affected by the death penalty and their families, highlighting the importance of taking into account the structural, social and individual conditions that may contribute to a person being sentenced to death and which are documented as disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations. This theme also underscores the severe psychological and physical suffering caused by prolonged death row incarceration, which has long been considered contrary to the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by the case law of the European Court of Human Rights;

5. encouraged the pursuit of initiatives from the Council of Europe and its member States to promote the global abolition of capital punishment, in particular initiatives concerning young people; in this regard, encouraged implementation of the multilateral co-operation programme "Death is not Justice: Abolition of the Death Penalty in Europe and Beyond – Phase 2", and invited member States to consider providing voluntary contributions;

6. welcomed again the signature by Azerbaijan of Protocol No. 13 on 8 March 2023 and encouraged Azerbaijan, as the last remaining member State not to have ratified it, to proceed swiftly to its ratification;

7. encouraged again the relevant authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure the full implementation of the 2019 ruling of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the death penalty provision in the Constitution of Republika Srpska;

8. regretted that executions continued to be carried out across States in the United States, a Council of Europe observer State, reaching in 2025 the highest figure since 2009; recalled the Committee of Ministers' Declaration of 30 January 2024 expressing its particular concern over the unprecedented use in the State of Alabama of a new and controversial method of execution referred to as nitrogen hypoxia, despite serious concerns raised by a number of international organisations including the United Nations that it ".. may amount to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment"; noted with regret that this State has continued to carry out executions using this method, that the State of Louisiana also used it, and that several other States of the United States of America have authorised its use; called on the States using this method to abandon it immediately; regretted that Japan resumed executions in 2025 and 2026; called again on the authorities of observer States Japan and the United States to promote an open and democratic debate towards the abolition of the death penalty;

9. reiterated the Council of Europe's readiness to share its experience on abolition of the death penalty with its observer States, in particular the United States and Japan, through initiatives in conjunction with them;

10. welcomed the announcement by Morrocco of the organisation of the next World Congress against the Death Penalty in Marrakech in 2029; welcomed again the launch of a co-operation project on the abolition of the death penalty between the Council of Europe and the National Human Rights Council of Morocco and the implementation of its first project in spring 2026 focusing on raising awareness among and on training young people; looked forward to the implementation of further projects in view of the next World Congress; reiterated that the Council of Europe also stands ready to exchange on this theme with other States covered by the policy of the Council of Europe towards neighbouring regions;

11. deplored the fact that Belarus has made use of capital offences added to its criminal code in 2022 and 2023 to impose death sentences; reiterated their strong call on the authorities of Belarus to stop all executions pending abolition of the death penalty and to apply the alternative punishment provided for in the Belarusian criminal legislation; welcomed the adoption in June 2025 by the Belarusian democratic forces of a memorandum on the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus following a seminar organised by the Council of Europe within the framework of the Contact Group between the Council of Europe and Belarusian democratic forces and civil society; welcomed the organisation by the Council of Europe of a public event on the situation of the death penalty in Belarus at the last World Congress against the Death Penalty as part of the activities on the death penalty foreseen for 2026-2027 by the Contact Group, and encouraged their implementation;

12. reiterated their call on the authorities of the Russian Federation to transform the moratorium on the death penalty, established by the Constitutional Court, into a *de jure* abolition;

13. deplored the adoption in 2026 by Israel of two laws expanding the scope of the death penalty, while there has been no execution in this country since 1962, and called on the authorities of Israel to abandon these laws;

14. welcomed the adoption of legislation abolishing the death penalty in Lebanon after 22 years under a moratorium on execution, which is a significant step forward and moves Lebanon closer to Council of Europe standards;

15. welcomed the contribution of the Council of Europe to the World Congress against the Death Penalty which took place in Paris, France, from 30 June to 2 July 2026; in this respect, appreciated the role given to the network of young ambassadors against the death penalty at the World Congress; highlighted that the Council of Europe stands ready to contribute to follow-up work, for example on the role of the judiciary in the abolition of the death penalty;

16. agreed to resume consideration of this issue at one of their forthcoming meetings, but no later than April 2027.