

[1] ABOLITIONIST AND RETENTIONIST COUNTRIES

More than two thirds of countries in the world have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice:¹

- **110** countries² abolished the death penalty **for all crimes**.
- **8** countries³ abolished the death penalty **for ordinary crimes only**, with exceptions placed on crimes committed in times of war.
- **27** countries⁴ can be considered **abolitionist in practice** as they have not held an execution for the last 10 years and are believed to have a policy or established practice of not carrying out executions.
- In total **144** countries have abolished the death penalty **in law or in practice**.
- **55** countries and territories **still uphold and use the death penalty**.
- **18** countries⁵ carried out **executions** in 2021.
- In 2021, the top five executioners were **China, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria**.

[2] PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS GLOBAL ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

Whilst the number of executions has increased in 2021, the level is still historically low, being the second lowest registered by Amnesty since 2010 at least. Once again, **18** countries proceeded to executions, consolidating the record set last year. Positive and negative outcomes occurred in **Iraq**. The number of executions **dropped by 62%** but the number of known death sentences rose more than threefold in comparison to 2020. **Egypt's** execution number dropped by 22%.

In the **USA** the execution number dropped to the lowest on record since 1988 and a temporary moratorium on executions was established by federal administration. **Virginia** became the **23rd State** to abolish the death penalty in the US. **Sierra Leone** and **Kazakhstan** both abolished the death penalty in 2021. **Papua New Guinea** abolished the death penalty in early 2022, and the **CAR** in June 2022.

Armenia ratified the Second Optional protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the death penalty in March 2021.

[3] DEATH SENTENCES AND EXECUTIONS

In 2021, the number of executions was on the rise again; at least **579** executions were recorded while **2,052** death sentences were handed down in **55 countries** (compared to approx. 1,477 in 55 countries in 2020). At least **24** of the executed persons were women. Because of a lack of information and/or transparency from many retentionist governments, such as China whose figures could not be incorporated in the above number, those figures are the lowest ones that could be determined. As such, the number of executions and death sentences are likely to be underestimated. At the end of 2021, **28,670** people were known to be under a sentence of death.

[Asia]

Human rights organizations working in and on **China** estimate the number of its executions in 2021 was in the thousands; figures pertaining to the death penalty remain a state secret in China, as in **North Korea** and **Viet Nam**. The number of recorded death sentences has significantly increased in **Myanmar**, under martial law since February 2021. Recorded death sentences are also alarming in India and Pakistan as they are increasing. Overall, **five countries**⁶ recorded

¹ For 2021 figures shown in this document, see: Amnesty International, Global Report Death sentences and executions. 2021 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/3760/2021/en/>

² Albania, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chad, Colombia, Congo (Republic of the), Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kiribati, Kosovo*, 234 Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niue, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Sweden,

Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Togo, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, UK, Ukraine, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Vatican City, Venezuela.

³ Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Israel, Kazakhstan, Peru.

⁴ Algeria, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Eswatini (former Swaziland), Ghana, Grenada, Kenya, Laos, Liberia, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco/Western Sahara, Myanmar, Niger, Papua New Guinea, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, South Korea (Republic of Korea), Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Tonga, Tunisia, Zambia.

⁵ A figure followed with a "+" indicates the lowest reliable number of people executed although it is believed by Amnesty International that more people have been executed in reality; a "+" without any figure means Amnesty International have corroborated more than one executions but had no sufficient information to provide a credible: Viet Nam (+), Oman (+), North Korea (+), UAE (1+), Belarus (1+), Japan (3), Botswana (3), Bangladesh (5), South Sudan (9+), USA (11), Yemen (14+), Iraq (17+), Somalia (21+), Syria (24+), Saudi Arabia (65), Egypt (83+), Iran (314+), China (1,000s).

⁶ Bangladesh, China, Japan, North Korea, Viet Nam

executions, the lowest number in more than 20 years. The region saw a large increase in the number of new death sentences- **819** recorded in 2021, as compared to 517 in 2020. The death sentences handed down were, in many cases, seen **as a violation to international human rights standards** given that they were applied in the context of crimes that do not meet the “most serious crime” definition (for instance, the application of capital punishment for drug offences, and economic crime). According to Amnesty International, **people who were under 18 years of age at the time of the offense have been sentenced to death** in Maldives.

[Middle East & North Africa]

Unlike 2020, where executions decreased, the Middle East and North Africa saw an overall **19% increase** in executions, with **7 countries** carrying out **520** recorded executions; this is largely due to an increase in executions in states like **Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen**. Recorded death sentences sharply increased in the region, going from 632 in 2020 to **834** death sentences in 2021. This increase is due to significant rise in **Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon**. Egypt continued to proceed to mass executions, based on mass trials involving manifest unfair proceedings. **Confessions obtained under torture** continue to be used by courts in **Iran**. In **Yemen**, 9 men were **executed publicly**, including a 17 years old teenager at the time of the crime.

[America]

For the 13th consecutive year, the **United States** was the only nation to carry out executions in the Americas. But the United States made great progress. The region broke last year’s record with new historically low figures regarding executions- **11 executions** in 2021 (as compared to 17 in 2020), of which 3 were Federal executions. In July 2021 the US administration established a **temporary moratorium** on executions, and Virginia became the 23rd State to abolish the death penalty. The death penalty is still used against people with mental or intellectual disabilities. And in 2021, in the United States, **18** death sentences were handed **down in 7 States** (same as 2020). The military authorities had not carried out executions since 1961. Outside the United States, only **Trinidad and Tobago** and **Guyana** handed down respectively 3 and 4 new death sentences in 2021.

[Sub Saharan Africa]

In 2021, the only countries to carry out executions in Sub-Saharan Africa were **Botswana, Somalia, and South Sudan**. Overall, there was a significant increase in executions and in handing down of death sentences. In 2020, 305 death sentences were handed down and 16 individuals executed- compared to **373 convictions** and **33 executions**, respectively in 2021. Additionally, we note the **commutation** of 83 death sentences in **Nigeria**, 26 in **DRC**. **Zambia** commuted every death sentence of inmates that have been on death row for more than 8 years (23 commutations).

[4] EXECUTION METHODS

Executions in 2021 were carried out primarily through **beheading** (Saudi Arabia), **hanging** (Bangladesh, Botswana, Egypt, UAE, Iraq, Iran, Japan, South Sudan, etc), **lethal injection** (China, United States, Vietnam, etc) and **shooting** (Belarus, China, North Korea, Somalia, Yemen, etc).

[5] INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS SUPPORTING ABOLITION

Progress towards abolition has been made through the adoption of international treaties, whereby States pledge not to use capital punishment:

- **Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty** has been ratified by **89** States as of June 2022, and signed but not ratified by 1 other.
- **Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights on the abolition of the death penalty**, has been ratified by **13** States in the Americas.
- **Protocol No. 6 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms** has now been ratified by **46** European States and signed but not ratified by 1 other.
- **Protocol No. 13 to the European Human Rights Convention concerning the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances** has been ratified by **44** European States and signed, but not ratified by 1 other.

Protocol No. 6 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms provides for the abolition of the death penalty in times of peace, whereas Protocol No. 13 provides for its total abolition. The Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well the Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights also provide for the total abolition of the death penalty but give the party States the possibility to make an exception during times of war.