

REPORT WORLD DAY AGAINST THE
DEATH PENALTY 2023

DEATH PENALTY: AN IRREVERSIBLE TORTURE

10 OCTOBER 2023

21ST WORLD DAY
AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY



www.worldcoalition.org

**WORLD
COALITION**
— AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY —

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FOREWORD

Why have we chosen torture as the theme for this year's World Day against the Death Penalty for the second year running?

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty ("World Coalition") aims to strengthen the international dimension of the fight against the death penalty. Its ultimate goal is the universal abolition of the death penalty. In countries where the death penalty is applied, the World Coalition strives to reduce its use by supporting and invoking respect for international human rights standards. Since the creation of the World Coalition in 2002, significant progress has been made towards universal abolition of the death penalty. Many states that still retain the death penalty either no longer execute or have since restricted its application.

Every October 10, the World Day against the Death Penalty ("World Day") unites the global abolitionist movement and mobilizes civil society, political leaders, legal experts, the general public and others to support the call for universal abolition of capital punishment. This day encourages and consolidates the political and general awareness of the worldwide movement against the death penalty.

In 2023, the World Day continued to explore the relationship between the application of the death penalty and torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, a reflection initiated in 2022. By continuing to focus on this theme for the second year in a row, **the World Coalition for the first time adopted a cyclical approach** for the World Day action, replacing a previous 1 year/1 theme approach, in favor of a 2 year/1 theme approach. This shift addresses the recommendations from members of the World Coalition and an external consultancy conducted for World Day 2021, while also incorporating the insights and lessons learned from organizing twenty World Days. Notable among these observations is the need for member organizations of the World Coalition to have more time to familiarize themselves with the theme and engage in results-oriented advocacy. Additionally, the threshold effect¹ observed in event organization over the past 2-3 years raises questions about the Secretariat's role in supporting activity implementation. Furthermore, the new context created by the successful institutionalization of this World Day, established from scratch in 2002, is also considered. This poses the question of what is needed to continue mobilizing efforts for World Day and how the abolitionist movement and member-organizations of the World Coalition can engage in an effective campaign. This multi-year approach aims to promote long-term, impact-focused actions. By favoring a two-year approach, the World Coalition hopes to encourage sustained mobilization around a specific theme, enabling concrete results to be achieved around the abolition of the death penalty and, pending this, a reduction in the application of this punishment.

The aim of the 2023 World Day was therefore to reinforce the links already established in 2022 between the application of the death penalty and torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, namely:

- Physical or psychological torture, which has in many cases been used to obtain confessions of guilt to capital crimes;

¹ The Global Coalition has observed in recent years that the number of activities organized has not exceeded a certain "threshold."

- “Death row syndrome”, anxiety developed by those under the threat of execution especially for prolonged periods of time, which contributes to the long-term psychological decline of a person's health;
- Harsh living conditions on death row, contributing to physical deterioration;
- Execution methods that cause exceptional pain;
- The existence of discrimination based on sex, gender, poverty, age, sexual orientation, religious or ethnic minority status and other factors that may aggravate the cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of people sentenced to death.

Data collection methodology

With a view to improving and optimizing the way we measure the impact of World Day; this report is based on the use of new data collection methods that will be integrated into future World Day research to create more sustainable outputs. To compliment the evolution of World Day theme/cycle as laid out in the introduction of this report, these research innovations represent the first steps in a broader reflection on how the evaluation of World Day has been carried out to date. To ensure the transparency and clarity of the data presented in this report, this section details the origin of the data collected and the methods used to gather it.

Data on media coverage and social networks:

Media and social network coverage of World Day 2023 was measured using the online monitoring tool "TalkWalker"². This tool measures a topic's online presence and engagement based on a wide range of sources including online media, print, radio, and social networks. TalkWalker can measure engagement rates³, reach⁴ and impressions⁵ relating to a particular topic in over 187 different languages.

For this report, we commissioned TalkWalker to assess the media and social network visibility of World Day 2023 from October 1st to 13th, 2023⁶. During this period, TalkWalker analyzed all mentions of World Day and, more broadly, of the abolition of the death penalty⁷.

As far as media coverage is concerned, TalkWalker scrutinized the visibility of the World Day across a variety of sources, including online news, blogs, forums, newspapers, TV, radio, magazines, wire services, podcasts, and press releases. It should be noted that the data provided for "media coverage" is limited to online media, and does not reflect "total" media coverage, which would include print media data. The World Coalition Secretariat has access to print media data only through its member organizations and partners who choose to share information for their countries/coverage.

For social network coverage, TalkWalker analyzed the World Day's visibility on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, and Tiktok.

Data on events organized to mark the World Day:

Two approaches have been adopted to identify World Day events:

² See: <https://www.talkwalker.com/fr>

³ Engagement for an article/publication is the sum of actions taken in response to that article/publication. Engagement for a topic is the sum of engagements measured for all articles/publications related to the topic. Here, we are talking about engagement for articles/publications relating to the World Day against the Death Penalty around October 10.

⁴ The reach of an article/publication represents the number of people reached by articles/publications relating to a subject.

⁵ The impressions of a tweet are the sum of the followers of the person publishing the tweet. Audience impressions are the sum of impressions of each tweet (including retweets) related to a specific topic, in this case the World Day against the Death Penalty around October 10.

⁶ This period was chosen to include the post-World Day campaign period (10 days of mobilizations launched by the World Coalition), on October 10 and a few days after, to ensure coverage of all mentions of World Day due to different time zones.

⁷ The platform was invited to follow the mentions of: "World Day Against the Death Penalty", "Abolish the Death Penalty" "Abolition of the Death Penalty" and the hashtag "#EndDeathPenalty", in over 17 languages, as well as alternative hashtags identified as often used such as "NoDeathPenalty #EndTheDathPenalty #AbolitionNow", etc.

- Consultation with World Coalition members: a Survey Monkey questionnaire was sent to members before and after the World Day. The questionnaire sent out before⁸ was designed to identify planned events and inform the entire network. The questionnaire sent out after the World Day⁹ was designed to identify the events effectively organized and ask members about their impact.
- Internet information watch: around October 10, the World Coalition Secretariat carried out an information watch¹⁰ on the Internet (including social networks) and through newsletters and information shared by Coalition members.

In this report, due to their large number, not all events organized by civil society organizations have been mentioned. Wherever possible, events linked to the World Day theme, “innovative” events and those that had an impact have been detailed. Details of all events counted can be found in the appendix available upon request from the World Coalition Secretariat.

As for previous world days, the events identified were categorized as cultural¹¹, educational¹², media¹³, social media¹⁴, political¹⁵ and traditional¹⁶. The "social networks" category corresponds to campaigns on social networks carried out by abolitionist civil society organizations (World Coalition member organizations and allies) on World Day. A "social networks campaign" corresponds to a series of coordinated actions and publications aimed at raising the profile of World Day and the abolition of the death penalty on October 10. This often involves several publications/tweets or the creation of distinctive visuals. This is a departure from previous years, when one tweet was considered an event. A campaign of 10 tweets thus corresponded to 10 events. This year, in the interests of methodological consistency and harmonization of event categorization, "social network" events have been counted as "social media campaigns". For each organization that conducted a campaign (consisting of several publications/tweets), was counted as a single event. The calculation of the number of tweets relating to the World Day is reflected in the "social network coverage" section. This **difference in methodology largely explains the difference in the number of events recorded this year compared with previous years**. If, as in previous years, a tweet was counted as an event, the total number of events would rise to over 1,000 (See data in section I), as on previous World Days.

Finally, to strengthen the qualitative measurement of the impact of World Day, a new section focusing on the impact of World Day has been added. This section has been fed with responses from World Coalition members to the Survey Monkey questionnaire.

⁸ The questionnaire was completed by 10 French-speaking members and 43 English-speaking members, for a total of 53 member organizations.

⁹ The questionnaire was completed by 14 French-speaking members and 36 English-speaking members, for a total of 50 member organizations.

¹⁰ Information watch is the continuous process of collecting, analyzing and disseminating information relevant to a company's business.

¹¹ Cultural events include film screenings, plays, art exhibitions and more.

¹² Educational events include school visits, round-table discussions, various types of publications, workshops and more.

¹³ Media events include press conferences, contribution to World Day coverage, etc.

¹⁴ Social networking “events correspond” to social networking campaigns carried out by abolitionist civil society organizations (World Coalition member organizations and allies) on the occasion of World Day. A campaign is made up of several tweets/publications.

¹⁵ Political events include advocacy meetings, and meetings with institutional and governmental bodies.

¹⁶ Traditional events include sit-ins, petitions, demonstrations and so on.

World Day 2023 in brief

During World Day campaign, the hashtag #NoDeathPenalty was used **10,700 times**, with an average of 826 publications per day.

Thanks to the positions taken by human rights actors at international, regional and national levels, recognition of the links between the death penalty and torture has increased.

32,100 mentions of the World Day against the Death Penalty and the abolition of the death penalty were recorded on social networks during the World Day campaign.

Numerous intergovernmental, international and national human rights institutions have publicly expressed their opposition to the death penalty and torture, creating an international echo.

World Day Against the Death Penalty was the subject of at least **5,710 media publications**.

305,600,000 people were reached by publications linked to the abolition of the death penalty for World Day on social networks and the media.

I. Continuing Advocacy: Shedding Light on the Relationship between Capital Punishment and Torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

1. Raising awareness: Understanding the links between the death penalty and torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment¹⁷

- The World Coalition used Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to run a **ten-day social networking campaign** on the theme of World Day 2023.
- The World Coalition shared a **social networking toolbox** with its members so that they can use texts and images for their own social networking campaigns. In particular, the toolbox was shared [on Trello](#) to facilitate access to resources.
- The World Coalition has distributed its **mobilization kit** and **World Day 2023 tools** to member organizations and abolitionist partners, both digitally and by sending physical packets of printed materials.
- The World Coalition has dedicated a **newsletter** to the World Day call to action and to raising awareness among its networks.
- The World Coalition has launched an **information** campaign **on WhatsApp** among its African member organizations¹⁸.
- The World Coalition organized a **high-level panel** featuring UN experts (Morris Tidball-Binz, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and Juan Méndez, former Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment) and exonerees (Sabrina Butler-Smith and Herman Lindsey from Witness to Innocence) to talk about the link between torture and capital punishment. This discussion was then [shared on Youtube](#)¹⁹.

2. Create and share World Day tools to support advocacy on these issues

To raise awareness and mobilize people and organizations around the world, the World Coalition created information and mobilization tools that were made available to members, partners and anyone wishing to take an active part in World Day. These tools were available on request, and could be downloaded from the World Coalition website or the [Trello board](#). All tools were available in at least English and French.

- World Day 2023 poster (available in 16 languages including Akan, Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, English, Farsi, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Lingala, Luganda, Russian, Spanish, Swahili and Urdu);
- World Day 2023 information brochure (available in English, French and Arabic)
- Two brochures on gender and the death penalty (one on women and the death penalty and the other on LGBTQIA+ people and the death penalty);

¹⁷ Only activities organized by the Secretariat and the World Day Working Group are listed here. Members' activities are listed below under II "Encouraging the organization of local initiatives and strengthening abolitionist civil society".

¹⁸ In 2023, WhatsApp messages were sent to WhatsApp groups managed by the World Coalition, as well as to individuals, for a total of 174 French speakers and 30 English speakers. A total of 204 participants received WhatsApp messages in 24 countries (Guinea-Conakry, Burundi, Mauritania, Niger, Togo, DRC, RCI, Cameroon, CAR, Congo, Mali, Benin, Mada, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Liberia, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, France, UK).

¹⁹ World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Torture and the death penalty: Discussion with special rapporteurs and exonerees, video available on youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LAyl-luv24&t=2770s>

- World Day 2023 detailed sheet (updated from 2022) ;
- Facts and figures 2023;
- Mobilization kit World Day 2023;
- The compilation of testimonies including accounts of torture in the death penalty process, has been updated and translated into English and French;
- The practical tool on how to work with UN mechanisms on torture and the death penalty has been updated and translated into French and English;
- World Day 2022 report.

3. Distribution of the tools created

A total of 600 envelopes and packages containing a sampling of World Day material were sent out worldwide in July, along with 26 personalized envelopes and boxes in September. World Day brochures and posters were also distributed in person during missions in October to Addis Ababa at the African Union and to Arusha at the ACHPR session, as well as 150 brochures (50 in French and 100 in English) and 150 posters (50 in French and 100 in English) at the General Assembly. A total of **2,395 posters and 5,011 brochures** were distributed for the World Day.

This year, unlike previous years, no additional posters were directly sent to member countries due to logistical problems. In other words, there was a risk that the posters would not arrive in time for World Day, and this would have involved additional costs. Consequently, members placed orders for an **additional 1,050 posters**, and local printing costs were reimbursed in Tanzania, Tunisia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In addition to the English and French tools, the posters were made available in 14 other languages (**16 in total**), including Akan, Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, English, Farsi, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Lingala, Luganda, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, and Urdu.

All World Day tools were posted on the [World Coalition Against the Death Penalty's 2023 World Day webpage](#). 51 organizations and institutions indicated that they preferred to receive only digital tools, which could be downloaded free of charge. In addition, to facilitate access to World Day tools for coalition members, a [Trello board](#) was created, listing all the tools developed.

According to an analysis of the World Coalition website, **between October 1 and 10, 7,200 users logged on to the site**. Additionally, during the same period:

- 639 users visited the World Day page in [English](#), 138 users visited the World Day page in [French](#), 54 the World Day page in [Spanish](#), 18 the World Day page in [Arabic](#), 27 the World Day page in [Russian](#), and 15 the World Day page in [Farsi](#).
- The "Take Action" page was consulted by 260 users in [English](#) and 45 in [French](#). In all, the page received 395 views.
- The downloadable "Facts and figures" page was consulted 89 times in [English](#) and 52 times in [French](#).
- 41 users in [English](#) and 14 in [French](#) consulted the "Facts and figures" document, which recorded a total of 78 views.
- The mobilization kit, accompanied by the leaflets "Women and the death penalty" and "LGBTQIA+ and the death penalty", was consulted by a total of 92 users and recorded 122 views in [English](#).

In **October 2023**, a survey was conducted among World Coalition members to evaluate World Day and gather feedback via Survey Monkey. According to the survey, the most useful tools and documents were the poster, the facts and figures sheet, the detailed sheet, the testimonials tool, and the World Day 2022report.

II. Encourage local initiatives and strengthen abolitionist civil society

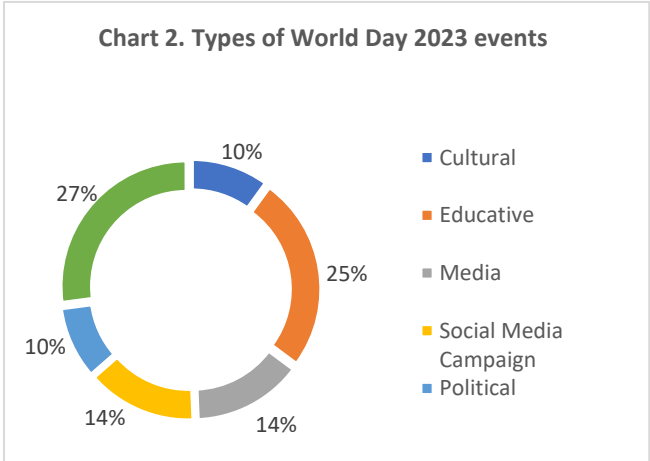
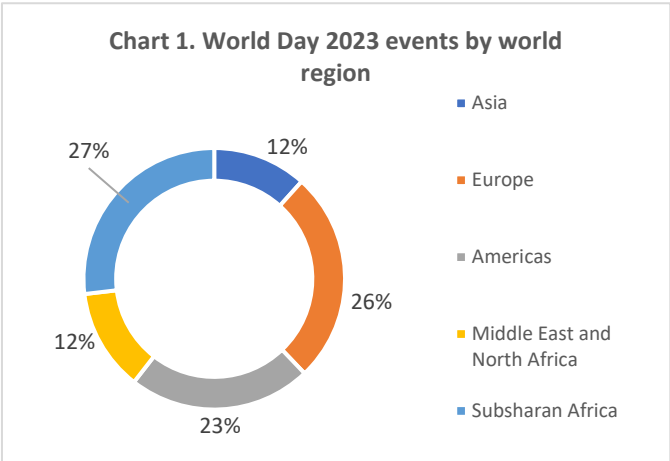
1. Local initiatives supported by the World Coalition

In 2023, as part of the Africa project, the World Coalition financially supported the implementation of 5 small “World Day” projects up to 1,000 EUR each? in **Kenya** (through the Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists), **Mauritania** (through the Coalition Mauritanienne et Coordination Eveil and the Coordination Eveil et cause pour l'Unité Nationale et la lutte contre l'esclavage), **Burundi** (through the Observatoire Burundais des Prisons), **Sierra Leone** (Society for Human Rights and Development Organisation) and the **Democratic Republic of Congo** (Union Chrétienne pour le Progrès et la Défense des Droits de l'Homme). Details of these activities can be found in the following section.

2. Local initiatives organized by members for World Day 2023

In 2023, the World Day recorded **310 events**²⁰ worldwide, in 57 countries. The global breakdown of events by world region is shown in graph 1, with the majority of events taking place in sub-Saharan Africa (27%), followed by Europe (26%), the Americas (23%), the Middle East (12%) and Asia (12%).

Traditional events such as assemblies and demonstrations account for the majority of World Day 2023 events, with 27% of all registered events (corresponding to 84 events). Next are educational events with 25% (corresponding to 78 events), social networking campaigns with 14% (corresponding to 44 events), media events with 14% (corresponding to 44 events), cultural events with 10% (corresponding to 31 events) and finally, political events with 10% (corresponding to 29 events).



²⁰ As mentioned in the "methodology" section, changes have been made to the way in which events are counted, which explains the discrepancy with the number of events in previous years. In previous years, every tweet published by a civil society organization was counted as an event. This year, only "social network campaigns" were counted as events, and these were counted only once. In previous years, each tweet from a campaign corresponded to an event (tweets were counted, not campaigns). This year, a social networking campaign organized by a civil society organization can only be counted once. So if, as in previous years, tweets were added to the sum of events, a total of around 1,000 events would be reached.

3. Details of the global mobilization

3.1 Americas

At least 70 events were organized in the Americas, including the USA, Canada, such as Colombia, Venezuela and Peru and Caribbean countries such as Cuba. These events took various forms, including rallies, webinars, seminars, exhibitions, the publication of statements and social networking campaigns.

In the USA, webinars were organized by Death Penalty Focus (DPF), The Advocates for Human Rights (TAHR), Death Penalty Action (DPA) and American Constitution Society (ACS). The one organized by DPF focused on solitary confinement, with the participation of the organization's president, Mike Farrell, the former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan E. Méndez, and a lawyer from American Civil Liberties. The webinar organized by TAHR addressed how to bring issues of torture and the death penalty before the UN Committee against Torture, and the results of this advocacy work. DPA organized a discussion on what it means to carry out abolition work, and the many experiences and emotions that come with it. Finally, ACS organized a discussion on why the death penalty should be considered an act of torture, focusing on how the US Supreme Court systematically errs in death penalty cases by ignoring the psychological torture involved.

Events such as the public exhibition organized by Witness to Innocence (WTI) and Together Against the Death penalty (ECPM) in collaboration with the Spanish Embassy and the European Union Delegation put art in the spotlight. The exhibition featured reproductions of art works created by people sentenced to death.

In the Caribbean, a joint opinion piece²¹ was published by Greater Caribbean for Life (GCL) with the European Union delegation in Trinidad and Tobago. The article explores the complexities surrounding the death penalty today, pointing out that while it was historically seen as a symbol of justice and social protection, evolving perspectives on justice and the right to life require a critical reassessment of its ethical, social, and legal implications.

World Coalition members based in the Americas also organized social networking campaigns. These included Americans for Democracy and Human Rights Bahrain, Catholic Mobilizing Network, Equal Justice USA, and Human Rights Watch.

3.2 Asia

In Asia, 36 events were organized in 10 different countries. These events took a variety of forms, including film screenings, webinars and roundtables, training courses, exhibitions, the publication of statements and reports, social networking campaigns, and innovative events such as an escape game that allowed participants to experience the death penalty in action, and plays.

KontraS, and Justice Project Pakistan (JPP) published their annual reports²² for the World Day, highlighting the state of the death penalty over the period 2022-2023 in Indonesia and Pakistan respectively. The Coalition Against the Death Penalty in the Philippines and the Asian Network Against the Death Penalty (ADPAN) organized an online dialogue on the abolition of the death penalty and the

²¹ Delegation of the European Union to Trinidad and Tobago, Local joint event to mark World Day against the Death Penalty 2023. Accessible on the following link: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/trinidad-and-tobago/local-joint-op-ed-occasion-world-day-against-death-penalty-2023_en?ettrans=fr

²² KontraS, International Death Penalty Report: Steep Road for abolishing Death Penalty in Indonesia, 2023. Available at: <https://kontras.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/KontraS-Jalan-Terjal-Penghapusan-Hukuman-Mati-eng-Revisi.pdf>

fight against drug trafficking. In Indonesia, ECPM and KontraS planned a round table on the death penalty as irreversible torture. In Indonesia, Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Masyarakat (LBHM), a legal aid institute that provide free legal assistance to marginalized groups, also organized a debate focusing on the death penalty as a political instrument of anti-human rights regimes.

Some of the events organized were educational, such as the one organized by ADPAN for students to reinforce their knowledge of clemency procedures. The Association for Democracy in the Maldives (ADM) developed and shared awareness-raising materials on the application of the death penalty and the Islamic principles of Qisas.

Various innovative and artistic activities were also organized. The Taiwanese Alliance for the Abolition of the Death Penalty (TAEDP) organized an exhibition and discussions featuring letters, artworks, simulated living spaces in cells and interviews with relatives of people sentenced to death to give the public a glimpse into the lives of people on death row, understand their feelings as human beings and grasp their desire for dignity. JPP had the ingenious idea of organizing a "Caught!" escape game to engage, educate and inspire participants by immersing them in the complexities of the criminal justice system and the consequences of capital punishment. Redemption Pakistan organized a play that highlighted the misuse of the blasphemy law and other harsh laws that are widely used to sentence people to death. Film screening was also given pride of place, as the Eleos Justice initiative, affiliated to Monash University's Faculty of Law, organized a screening of the film "There is No Evil", which highlights the insidious realities, moral dilemmas and devastating human consequences of the death penalty in Iran.

Visits to prisons and death row inmates have been organized by various organizations, including TAEDP.

Finally, World Coalition members based in Asia have also organized campaigns on social networks. These include TAEDP, ADPAN, Kurdistan Human Rights Network and JPP.

3.3 Europe

82 events organized in Europe took place in 12 different countries, and several types of activity were organized by World Coalition member organizations.

In the first half of October, the German World Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (GCADP) opted for the daily publication of videos recorded by its members, giving a voice to those on death row. The Kurdistan Human Rights Association in Geneva organized a screening of short films including "The Symbol of Life" and "Seven Winters in Teheran". Based on footage shot clandestinely, "Seven Winters in Teheran" sheds light on an Iranian woman named Reyhaneh Jabbari, sentenced to death for the murder of the man who was about to rape her. After the screenings, there was a debate on executions in Iran and the anniversary of the revolution for women's lives and freedom. Amnesty International France organized a webinar to exchange views with experts on the link between the death penalty and torture, which is currently not recognized by current international standards.

Assemblies in support of Kenneth Smith, an Alabama death-row prisoner who survived a botched execution and who, at the time of World Day 2023, was facing execution using nitrogen, were also organized by the Comunità di Sant'Egidio in several European countries including Italy and Germany.

The Comunità di Sant'Egidio also organized meetings in Spain, Italy, Germany, and Belgium in Sant'Egidio language schools about migrants and the death penalty.

Members of the World Coalition based in Europe have also organized campaigns on social networks. These include ACAT France, ECPM, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the German Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, SALAM for Democracy and Human Right, International Bar Association Human Rights Institute, Amnesty France, Le Centre pour les droits civils et politiques, (CCPR Center), Death Penalty Project, Lifespark Movement against the death penalty and the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme.

3.4 Middle East and North Africa

In the Middle East and North Africa, 39 events took place in 13 different countries. The events organized took a variety of forms, including film screenings, roundtables, exhibitions, the publication of statements and reports, and social networking campaigns.

On World Day 2023, the European Organization for Human Rights in Saudi Arabia (ESOHR) published an article²³ on executions in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the practice as irreversible torture. The Center of Statistics of Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRA) also published its annual report²⁴ in an effort to raise public awareness of the state of the death penalty in Iran, particularly with hundreds of death row inmates awaiting execution.

In Lebanon, the Association Justice et Misericorde (AJEM) organized a round table discussion on the link between the death penalty and torture, highlighting the psychological, physical, and social effects suffered by victims of torture and those sentenced to death. During the session, lawyer Lina Al-Aya Chamoun offered an in-depth analysis of the death penalty, highlighting its fundamental gap with the prohibition of torture and other punishment or treatment considered cruel, inhuman, and degrading, and between law and reality. The Moroccan Coalition Against the Death Penalty also organized a national conference bringing together representatives of civil society organizations, government, and institutions.

Presentations on the death penalty were also organized at St Joseph's University in Lebanon by the Lebanese Association for Civil Rights (LACR) and ECPM, in partnership with the Association Justice Misericorde (AJEM) and the Académie universitaire pour la non-violence et les droits humains.

Various organizations have chosen to screen films to fuel debates. For example, the Organization for the Abolition of the Death Penalty in Iraq organized a screening of the documentary "Les Larmes du Bourreau" (The Executioner's Tears) and a sharing of the experiences of people who have been tortured and whose lives have been threatened in Iraqi prisons. The film explores the complex relationships between prisoners, their struggle for survival and the human condition in the prison

²³ European Saudi organization for Human Rights (ESOHR), Between Sentencing, Waiting, and Execution: Execution in Saudi Arabia is Continuous Torture, 2023 ; Available at the following address in English and Arabic only: <https://www.esohr.org/en/%d8%a8%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d9%83%d9%85-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%86%d8%aa%d8%b8%d8%a7%d8%b1-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%aa%d9%86%d9%81%d9%8a%d8%b0-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a5%d8%b9%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%85/>

²⁴ Center of Statistics of Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRA), Annual Report on Execution in Iran 2022-2023. Available at the following address: <https://www.en-hrana.org/world-day-against-the-death-penalty-annual-report-on-execution-in-iran-2022-2023/>

world. The Moroccan Coalition against the Death Penalty and the Moroccan Prison Observatory have also chosen to screen a film and host debates on the abolition of the death penalty.

Finally, World Coalition members based in the Middle East and North Africa have also organized campaigns on social networks. These include SALAM for Democracy and Abdorrahman Boroumand Center.

3.4 Sub-Saharan Africa

The 83 events organized in sub-Saharan Africa, took place in 20 different countries. The events organized took a variety of forms, including roundtables, conferences, the publication of statements and reports, and social networking campaigns.

In this region, conferences were organized, such as those in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritania, and Kenya. In Uganda, Penal Reform International (PRI) organized its conference on the rights of women affected by criminal justice, involving regional and international human rights experts, diplomats, members of the judiciary, political decision-makers, local leaders, law enforcement and prison officials, government representatives, civil society and concerned individuals (formerly incarcerated women, etc.). The conference highlighted existing gaps in access to justice affecting women in the criminal justice system, lessons, and good practices from different jurisdictions, and discussed the development of enlightened policies and more gender-sensitive criminal justice systems across the African continent. In the DRC, the Réseau des Associations de Défense des droits de l'Homme et des militants Abolitionnistes de la peine de mort (RADHOMA) and the Union chrétienne pour le progrès et la défense des droits de l'homme (UCPDHO) each organized a conference that brought together local authorities and leaders of armed groups to discuss the abolition of the death penalty and its link with the notion of torture. In Mauritania, the Coalition Mauritanienne contre la peine de mort and the Coordination Eveil et cause pour l'Unité Nationale et la Lutte contre l'esclavage organized a conference for political decision-makers (deputies, mayors, lawyers, judges, etc.) to reinforce reflections on the link between torture and the death penalty, and to encourage the total abolition of the death penalty in the country. In Kenya, the Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya) organized a half-day conference that brought together a variety of stakeholders to discuss the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill, 2023, which aims to abolish the death penalty in the country.

Training and awareness-raising seminars were also organized in the region. In Niger, Réseau Progrès Et Développement Humainitaire (REPRODEVH) organized a training workshop for prison officials, investigation units, civil society organizations and actors in the penal chain. The aim of the workshop was to promote collaboration and the fight against torture in Niger, highlighting Niger's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPTCAT) in November 2014, paving the way for the designation of a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), an independent monitoring body. In Douala, Cameroon, an awareness-raising workshop for civil society leaders, lawyers, journalists, and the Cameroon Human Rights Commission was coordinated by Rights and Peace around the theme of World Day 2023. The seminar highlighted the contradiction between the death penalty and torture in Cameroonian law. In Burundi, the Observatoire Burundais des Prisons organized a workshop on the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Furthermore, in Nigeria, a panel discussion was organized by Avocats San Frontières Nigéria, gathering the civil society and government representatives to

discuss death penalty and torture. The panel also discussed the death penalty abolition trends in Africa in the last 10 years. These events were supported by the French Embassy and the Australian High Commission in Nigeria and in partnership with the National Human Rights Commission.

Finally, World Coalition members based in the Middle East and North Africa have also organized campaigns on social networks. These include the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), Hope Behind Bars Africa, Human Rights Law Services, Legal and Human Rights Center, ICJ Kenya and others.

III. World Day 2023 Coverage

1. Institutional and media coverage of World Day 2023

1.1 Institutional resonance

On World Day 2023, numerous intergovernmental, international, and national institutions publicly expressed their opposition to the death penalty and torture, creating an international momentum. Various perspectives on understanding the link between torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and the death penalty were shared, reinforcing the reflections initiated in 2022 at international, regional, and national levels.

a) Statements by experts from international and regional human rights mechanisms

At the international level, **the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**, Alice Edwards, and **the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions**, Morris Tidball-Binz, have [reiterated their call](#) for the definitive abolition of the death penalty already issued in 2022, consolidating the link between the prohibition of torture and the death penalty. Their declaration highlights the incompatibility of the death penalty with the obligation to refrain from all acts of torture and ill-treatment, due to the severe suffering and pain inflicted on a person, from the moment he or she is condemned to death until his or her execution. The two experts recall that "it is practically impossible for States to impose the death penalty while respecting their human rights obligations, in particular the absolute and universal prohibition of torture"²⁵.

At regional level, **the Honorable Commissioner Idrissa Sow of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)** issued [a statement](#) calling for the abolition of the death penalty, highlighting the link between the death penalty, torture and other inhuman treatments. It recalled the suffering endured by those condemned to death and their families, demonstrating the urgent need to take rapid steps towards its abolition, or at least the institution of a legal or de facto moratorium²⁶.

b) Political decision-makers

²⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Press release, UN experts call for abolition of death penalty, October 10, 2023. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2023/10/un-experts-call-universal-abolition-death-penalty>

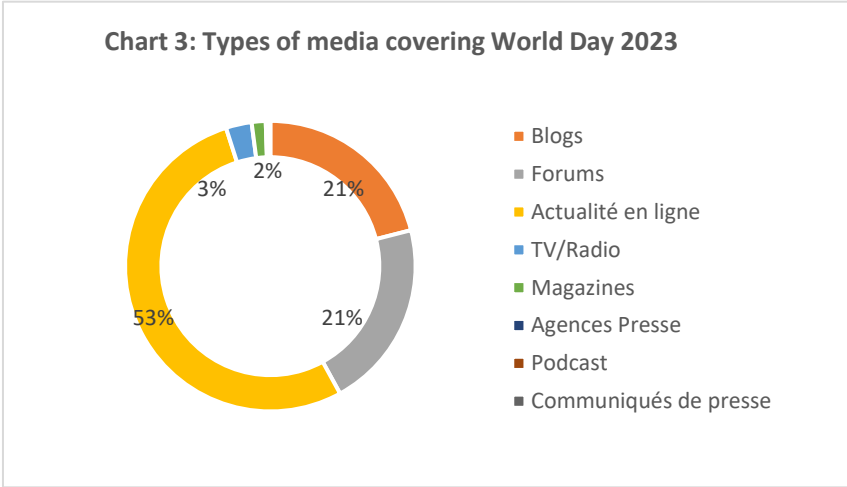
²⁶ African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Press release, Declaration on the occasion of the celebration of the World Day against the Death Penalty, October 10, 2023. Available at: <https://achpr.au.int/index.php/en/news/press-releases/2023-10-10/statement-occasion-celebration-world-day-against-death>

[Joint statements](#)²⁷ marking the World Day and its theme, issued by the **Secretary General of the Council of Europe (CE)** and the **High Representative for Foreign Affairs on behalf of the European Union (EU)**, have been posted on several EU websites, strongly reaffirming their unequivocal opposition to the death penalty, including its reintroduction, in all cases and under all circumstances. These include the EU delegation to Bangladesh and Uganda, two retentionist countries. These statements have been translated into an average of 24 languages, including languages of non-EU countries such as Russian, Arabic, Belarusian, Azeri, Persian and Armenian.

At least **8 governments representing abolitionist countries**, including [Belgium](#), [Switzerland](#), [Spain](#), [Italy](#), [France](#), [Sweden](#), [Norway](#) and [Canada](#), have published documents testifying to their commitment to the international abolitionist cause on the occasion of World Day 2023.

1.2 Media coverage of World Day 2023

According to data collected by TalkWalker²⁸, **the World Day was the subject of 5,710 media publications**. This corresponds to 3,028 articles in the online press (online news and newspapers), 1,200 blogs and 1,200 forums, 164 radio broadcasts, 89 magazines, 12 press agencies, 11 podcasts and 6 press releases that addressed the World Day. (See Chart 3 for a breakdown of media types). These publications generated at least **28,900 user engagements**²⁹ (this includes user reactions such as likes, comments, saves, impressions towards articles about the World Day etc.) and **reached around 10.6 trillion people worldwide**.



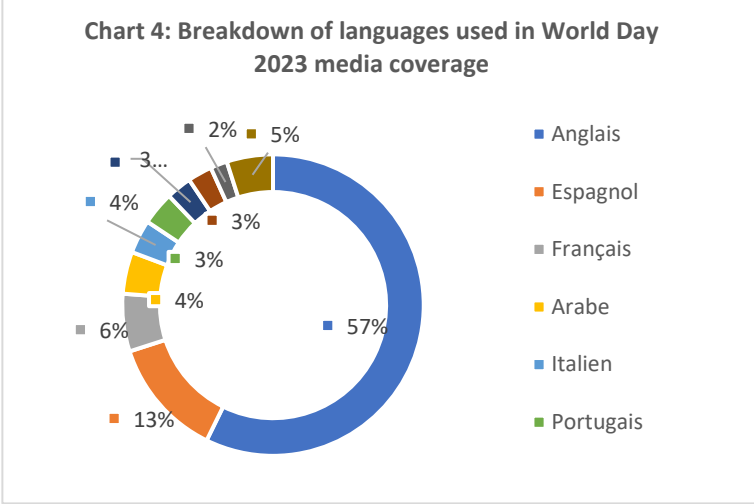
²⁷ Council of Europe, Press release, European and World Day against the Death Penalty, October 10, 2023: Joint statement by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the High Representative on behalf of the European Union, October 9, 2023. Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/10/09/european-and-world-day-against-the-death-penalty-10-october-2023-joint-statement-by-the-secretary-general-of-the-council-of-europe-and-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union/>

²⁸ For more details on the TalkWalker tool and the methods used to collect data, see the introductory methodology section on page 4.

²⁹ Engagement for an article/publication is the sum of actions taken in response to that article/publication. Engagement for a topic is the sum of engagements measured for all articles/publications related to the topic.

We observe that online news largely dominate media coverage of World Day 2023 (53% of media coverage), followed by blogs and forums (42%).

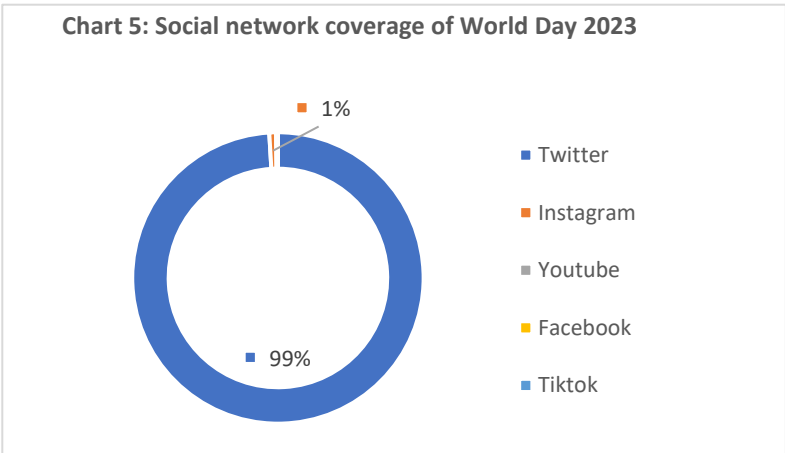
Furthermore, of all the media covering World Day 2023, English was the most widely used language, accounting for 57% of media coverage, followed by Spanish (13%), French (6%) and Arabic (4%) (see Chart 4).



1.3 Social media coverage of World Day 2023

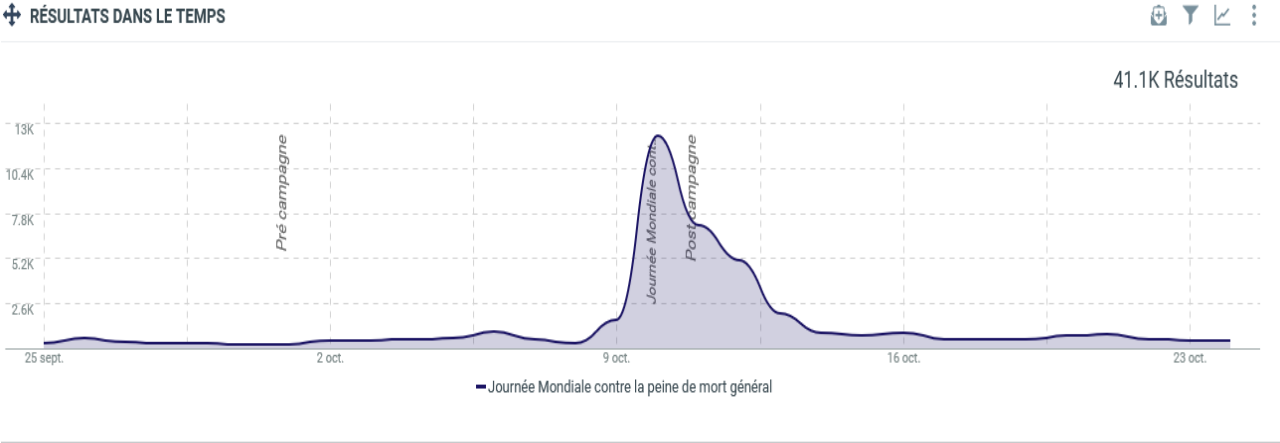
Using TalkWalker³⁰ software, we observed **32,100** publications relating to the World Day and the abolition of the death penalty from October 1 to 13 on X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok. These publications generated **112,900 engagements** from social network users (this includes likes, comments, retweets, etc.), resulting in approximately **305,600,000 people reached by publications related to the abolition of the death penalty for World Day**.

Among the various platforms analyzed, it is clear that Twitter clearly dominates in terms of coverage of World Day 2023 on social networks, accounting for 99% of results with 31,800 engagements on the platform, followed by Instagram with 240 posts. (See Chart 5)



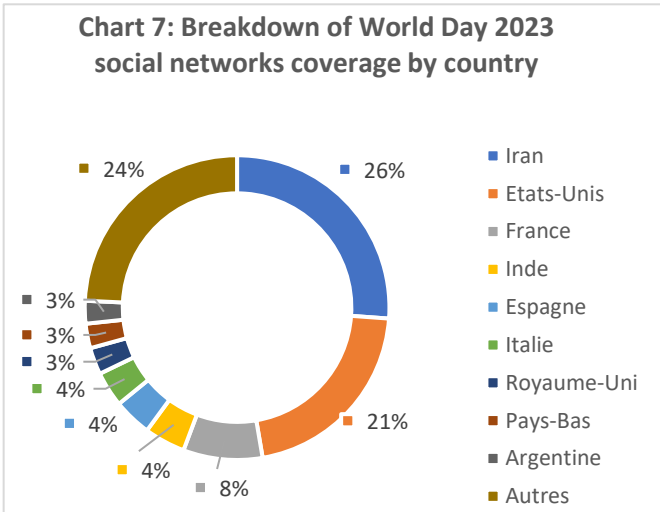
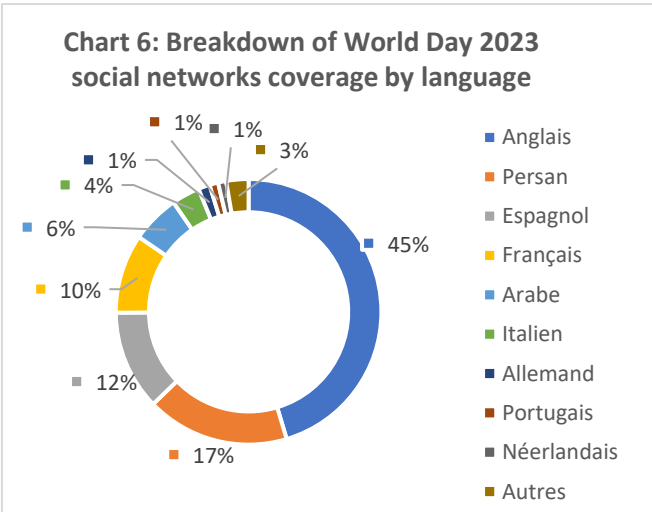
³⁰ For more details on the TalkWalker tool and the methods used to collect data, see the introductory methodology section on page 4.

The most used hashtag on Twitter was **#NoDeathPenalty** with **10,800 uses**, followed by **#StopExecutionsInIran** with **6,200 uses**. Throughout the "World Day" campaign, we can observe a peak in engagement and publications on World Day, 10 October.



Among the social networks covering World Day 2023 (Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Tiktok, English was the most widely used language accounting for 45.4% of media coverage, followed by Persian (17.5%), Spanish (12.3%) and French (9.5%) (See Chart 6).

Coverage of World Social Day 2023 on social networks reached many countries, with Iran leading the way with 8,400 pledges representing 26.2% of total pledges, followed by the USA (24.3%) and France (8.4%). (See Chart 7)



Furthermore, if we observe the World Coalition's campaign from 1 October to 10 October 2023 on social networks (Instagram, Twitter and Facebook), we can mention that the World Coalition's Instagram account gained 35 new followers and recorded a 166% increase in profile visits compared to the previous period. As for the World Coalition's Facebook page, it recorded a 406.5% increase in

visits over the previous period, with a reach of 1,436 accounts reached. 775 people visited the Facebook page at the beginning of October, with a peak of over 300 on 10 October. According to a 14-day summary on Twitter, the World Coalition account had 10,000 impressions, including 713 tweet impressions³¹ per day. Finally, using TalkWalker software, we were able to analyze the reach of the #NoDeathPenalty hashtag promoted by the World Coalition. Over the period^{er} to 13 October, **#NoDeathPenalty was used 10,700 times**, with an average of 826 publications per day using this hashtag.

VI. Impact of World Days 2022-2023

1. Progress in the recognition of the death penalty as equivalent to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

The aim of the 2022-2023 World Days was to highlight the links between the application of the death penalty and **torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**, in order to advocate its total abolition.

We can affirm that the mobilization of the abolitionist movement on these two World Days has led to **greater recognition of the link between the death penalty and torture**, and that the objectives identified have been partly achieved.

Initially, this recognition can be seen in the positions taken by abolitionist civil society organizations on the link between the death penalty and torture. For example, the [position paper on the death penalty and torture](#)³², drawn up by FIACAT and signed by 42 organizations, states that the death penalty is incompatible with the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, which is a peremptory norm of international law.

These positions have also been taken by international, regional and national human rights players. We can cite the following positions in particular:

- In October 2022 and 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, Alice Edwards, and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Morris Tidball-Binz, issued joint statements on the relationship between the death penalty and the absolute prohibition of torture. In particular, they highlighted the phenomenon of death row, which must be considered a form of inhuman treatment, as well as the almost total isolation of people sentenced to capital punishment, often held in illegal conditions of solitary confinement.
- In October 2022, the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan issued a statement demonstrating that the application of capital punishment is tantamount to torture.
- In November 2022, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted Resolution n°544 on the death penalty and the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, in which it urged "States parties to the African Charter that still maintain the death penalty to fully implement the right to life, the right to human dignity and the prohibition of torture".

³¹ The number of times your content, whether an article or a story, has been shown to users.

³² FIACAT, The death penalty and the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, October 9, 2023. Available at <https://www.fiacat.org/en/publications-en/reports/thematic-reports/3003-the-death-penalty-and-the-prohibition-of-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading-treatment-or-punishment>

- In December 2022, the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights handed down two judgments concerning the death sentences imposed on Marthine Christian Msuguri and Ghati Mwita in Tanzania. The Court ruled that the imposition of a death sentence violates Article 5 of the African Charter, concerning the right to human dignity (and therefore the prohibition of torture). The Court found that the psychological impact of a death sentence constituted inhuman treatment.
- Since 2022, UN special procedures have increasingly referred to the death penalty per se as a violation of the prohibition of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, as illustrated by the communications sent to the United Republic of Tanzania³³, Pakistan³⁴, Malawi³⁵, Saudi Arabia³⁶ and Belarus³⁷.
- In February 2023, in a recent letter to the Government of Saudi Arabia, several UN special procedures indicated that the death penalty for persons under the age of 18 was treatment equivalent to torture³⁸.
- In October 2023, Commissioner Idrissa Sow of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) issued a statement reminding us of the link between the death penalty, torture and other inhuman treatment, in particular by highlighting the suffering endured by those sentenced to death and their families.

Moreover, this recognition can be seen in the growing interest in **in-depth research** on the similarities between the death penalty and torture from a human rights perspective. For example, at the high-level panel organized by the World Coalition, Morris Tidball-Binz, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, highlighted how, from a medical point of view, the death penalty is tantamount to torture, citing the [groundbreaking research](#) carried out in the USA by doctors Joel Zivot and Mark Edgar, which shows that even lethal injection, which seems quick and painless, subjects the person to an excruciatingly slow death and can be akin to torture. This research also looks at the link between the judicial process leading to the death penalty and psychological torture, as John Bessler points out in his conclusions that death threats such as mock executions are a classic example of psychological torture³⁹.

2. Other impacts of World Day Against the Death Penalty

According to the member organizations of the World Coalition, in 2023, the main achievements of the World Day were to raise awareness among the general public and political decision-makers, and to broaden support for the abolition of the death penalty.

³³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. *l'Homme*, [UA TZA 2/2022](#), May 18, 2022.

³⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. *l'Homme*, [AL PAK 3/2022](#), June 27, 2022.

³⁵ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. *l'Homme*, [UA MWI 4/2022](#), September 23, 2022.

³⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Human Rights Council, [AL SAU 8/2022](#), June 13, 2022 and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, [AL SAU 1/2023](#), February 16, 2023.

³⁷ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. *Man*, [OL BLR 3/2022](#) May 23, 2022.

³⁹ Bessler, John D, "A Torturous Practice: Prohibiting the Death Penalty's Use Through a Peremptory Norm of International Law", Oxford Law Blogs, May 4, 2023. Available at: <https://blogs.law.ox.ac.uk/death-penalty-research-unit-blog/blog-post/2023/05/torturous-practice-prohibiting-death-penaltys>

For members of the World Coalition, the organization of activities such as conferences, webinars and film screenings helped raise awareness among people not usually involved in the abolitionist cause, thereby helping to **broaden the movement for the abolition of the death penalty**. Various member organizations mentioned the specific impact of this world day among students, suggesting a growing interest on their part in the issue of the death penalty. This would suggest that overall, the movement is gaining momentum among young people, not least thanks to the many conferences and webinars organized in faculties and universities around the world. In a similar vein, social networking campaigns would have aroused particular interest among a public that was supposedly unfamiliar with the issues and human rights violations associated with the death penalty, thus prompting further reflection on the issue.

World Coalition members have also highlighted the impact of this World Day at the **political level and with policymakers**, sometimes prompting governments and/or public authorities to take steps towards abolishing the death penalty or reducing its scope. A case in point is Niger, where the World Day led to the adoption of a new national strategic advocacy plan on the abolition of the death penalty.

Finally, the members of the World Coalition recalled that the World Day is of crucial importance to the **families of those condemned to death, as it reminds them that they are not alone, and that the issue of the death penalty remains topical**.

VI. Appendices

1. About the World Coalition

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, an alliance of over 160 NGOs, bar associations, local authorities and trade unions, was founded in Rome on May 13, 2002. It was founded following the commitment made by the signatories of the Final Declaration of the 1st World Congress against the Death Penalty organized by the French NGO Ensemble contre la peine de mort (ECPM) in Strasbourg in June 2001.

The aim of the World Coalition is to strengthen the international dimension of the fight against the death penalty. Its ultimate goal is universal abolition of the death penalty. To achieve its goal, the World Coalition advocates a definitive halt to death sentences and executions in countries where the death penalty is in force. In some countries, it is seeking a reduction in the use of capital punishment as a first step towards abolition.

Since 2003, the Coalition has declared October 10 World Day Against the Death Penalty.

2. Link to list of all members

You will find a complete list of all World Coalition members on our website, available here: <https://worldcoalition.org/who-we-are/member-organizations/>



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