



## [1] ABOLITIONIST AND RETENTIONIST COUNTRIES

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

- **112** countries<sup>2</sup> abolished the death penalty **for all crimes**.
- **9** countries<sup>3</sup> abolished the death penalty **for ordinary crimes only**, with exceptions placed on crimes committed in times of war, under military law or other exceptional circumstances.
- **23** countries<sup>4</sup> 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<sup>5</sup> **still uphold and use the death penalty**.
- **16** countries<sup>6</sup> were known to have carried out **executions** in 2023.
- In 2023, the recorded top five executioners were, in descending order: **China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Somalia** and the **USA**.

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

The number of countries known to have carried out executions has decreased – **16** in 2023 as compared to **20** in 2022, and numerous countries continue to take steps towards abolition, solidifying the international trend. Important legislative steps have been taken to

reduce the scope of the death penalty or abolish it altogether in **Pakistan, Malaysia, Ghana** and **Zimbabwe** in 2023.

**Russia** and **Tajikistan** are still observing an official moratorium on executions.

The European Convention on Human Rights Protocol No. 13 for abolition in all circumstances was signed by **Azerbaijan** in March 2023 and ratified by **Armenia** in February 2024.

In May 2024, **Ivory Coast** ratified the Second Optional protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

## [3] DEATH SENTENCES AND EXECUTIONS

**2023 saw the highest number of executions in the past seven years**, with at least **1,153** executions recorded while at least **2,428** death sentences were handed down in **52 countries** (compared to approx. **883** executions and **2,016** death sentences in 2022).

According to Amnesty International, **31** women were known to have been executed: **24** in **Iran**, **6** in **Saudi Arabia** and **1** in **Singapore**. 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 that could be determined. As such, the number of executions and death sentences are likely to be underestimated. At the end of 2023, **27,687** people were known to be under sentence of death.

<sup>1</sup> Assessment of trends in 2023 based on Amnesty International, Global Report Death sentences and executions. 2023 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/6548/2023/en/>

<sup>2</sup> Albania, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Fiji, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kosovo, 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, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome And Principe, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Togo, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Vatican City, Venezuela.

<sup>3</sup> Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Israel, Peru, Zambia.

<sup>4</sup> Algeria, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ghana, Grenada, Kenya, Laos, Liberia, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco/Western Sahara, Niger, Russia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Tonga, Tunisia.

<sup>5</sup> Afghanistan, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Botswana, China, Comoros, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nigeria, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine (State of), Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

<sup>6</sup> 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: Afghanistan (+), Bangladesh (5), China (+), Egypt (8), Iran (853+), Iraq (16+), Kuwait (5), North Korea (+), Palestine (State of) (+), Saudi Arabia (172), Singapore (5), Somalia (38+), Syria (+), USA (24), Viet Nam (+), Yemen (15+).

## [Americas]

For the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the **United States** was the only nation to carry out executions in the Americas. The number of executions carried out in the country was 24, including 23 men and one transgender woman. This number represents an increase of **33%** compared to 2022, when **18** executions were carried out. Also, the number of death sentences handed down increased compared to previous years going from **21** in 2022 to **25** in 2023. **Five** US states has proceeded to executions in 2023, minus one state compared to 2022. **Six** men are still facing capital punishment before unfair military commissions at the US naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The military authorities had not carried out executions since 1961. Outside the United States, only **Guyana** and **Trinidad and Tobago** handed down respectively **7** and **3** new death sentences in 2023.

## [Asia-Pacific]

Asia continues to be the region with the highest number of executions in the world, and the death penalty was extensively used for offenses that are not of “most serious crimes”. Human rights organizations working in and on **China** estimate the number of its executions in 2023 was in the **thousands**; figures pertaining to the death penalty remain a state secret in China, as in **North Korea** and **Viet Nam**. Overall, **six countries**<sup>7</sup> recorded executions, an increase from **five** in 2022. Nevertheless, no executions were recorded in **Japan** and **Myanmar**, countries which carried out executions in 2022. The region also saw an increase in the number of new death sentences - **948** in 2023, as compared to **861** in 2022. However, recorded death sentences have lowered in **India (165 to 120)** and **Myanmar (37 to 19)**. In **Maldives**, many people who were below 18 years old at the time of the offence remain under sentence of death.

## [Middle East & North Africa]

In Middle East and North Africa, known executions went up by **30%**, with **8 countries**<sup>8</sup> carrying out **1,073** recorded executions in 2023 while it was **825** in 2022. This sharp increase is largely due to the practice of judicial executions used among repression in **Iran (80%)** and **Saudi Arabia (16%)** which carried out **96%** of recorded executions in the region. In both countries, death penalty was highly used for drug-related offences. Recorded death sentences also increased in the region, going from **827** in 2022 to **950** in 2023 and were imposed in **17** countries compared to **16** in 2022. Significant reductions in death sentences were recorded in **Egypt (24 to 8)**, **Kuwait (7 to 5)**, **Saudi Arabia (196 to 172)**.

## [Sub-Saharan Africa]

In 2023, the only country known to have carried out executions in Sub-Saharan Africa was **Somalia**. Nevertheless, there was a significant increase in recorded executions and death sentences. In 2023, **494** death sentences were handed down in **14** countries and **38** individuals were executed - compared to **298** convictions in **16** countries and **11** executions, respectively in 2022.

## [4] EXECUTION METHODS

Executions in 2023 were carried out primarily through **beheading** (Saudi Arabia), **hanging** (Bangladesh, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Singapore, South Sudan, Syria), **lethal injection** (China, United States, Vietnam) and **shooting** (Afghanistan, China, North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), Palestine (State of), Somalia, Yemen).

## [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 **91** States as of May 2024.
- **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 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 **45** European States and signed 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.

<sup>7</sup>Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, North Korea, Singapore, Viet Nam.

<sup>8</sup> Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Palestine (State of), Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen.