

WA 34/04

AI Index AFR 05/009/2004

Date of web launch: 20 September

THE DEATH PENALTY IN WEST AFRICA

Current Action: Abolish the death penalty in Mauritania and the Gambia

In the Gambia, the death penalty, which had been abolished in April 1993, was re-established in August 1995 by the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council, although it never came into force.

Although no execution has taken place since 1987, sentences in Mauritania continue to be pronounced. Thus, in August 2004, two people were sentenced to death by the Criminal Court of Nouadhibou for murder. A hundred people, accused of “treason” (crime liable to the death penalty) following the failed coup attempt of June 2003, are still awaiting their trial and are at risk of being sentenced to death.

Take action:

Write to the Presidents of Gambia and Mauritania asking for:

- The ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Your Excellency,

I am writing in the context of the campaign for the abolition of the death penalty in the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) countries and Mauritania, launched by Amnesty International on 10 October 2003.

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 – the first international standard to provide that “everyone has the right to life” - more than two-thirds of countries have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice. The same trend exists in West Africa where, in more than a decade, the number of abolitionist countries has increased from 1 to 10. Two-thirds of the 15 ECOWAS countries have taken decisive steps towards recognition of the inviolability of the right to life.

Despite the fact that no execution has been carried out recently, death sentences continue to be pronounced by the judiciary. This is why I am asking you to do everything in your power to definitively abolish the death penalty in your country by ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This would demonstrate the importance you grant to the right to life.

Yours sincerely,

Appeals to:

Gambia

Col. Yahya Jammeh

President and Secretary of State for Defence

Office of the President
State House,
Banjul
Republic of the Gambia
Fax : +220 422 70 34
Email : info@statehouse.gm
Salutation: Your Excellency,

Mauritania

Monsieur le Président Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
BP 184
Nouakchott
Mauritanie
Salutation : Your Excellency,