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Albania: Death penalty on the way out

Amnesty International welcomes the announcement on Friday by the Albanian Constitutional Court that the death penalty is incompatible with the Albanian Constitution.

The organization urges the government to act quickly to amend the Criminal Code to reflect the Court's decision and to ratify Protocol Number 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights which obliges states to abolish the death penalty in law.

However, the organization is concerned at reported statements by the Albanian Chief Prosecutor that the death penalty will still apply in time of war or if war is imminent. In a letter to Prime Minister Ilir Meta, Amnesty International urged the government to remove this possibility and totally abolish the death penalty.

Albania introduced a moratorium on executions in 1995 upon its entry into the Council of Europe. Courts did however continue to pass death sentences. Twenty men who were under sentence of death have had their sentences suspended.

The Constitutional Court's decision follows an opinion which was adopted by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, which deemed the death penalty to be inconsistent with the Albanian Constitution.

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