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GAMBIA: REINTRODUCTION OF THE DEATH PENALTY - A RETROGRADE STEP

On 12 August 1995, the ruling Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) issued a decree reinstating the death penalty which had been abolished in April 1993.

"This decision by the Gambian government reverses the recent trend towards abolition in Africa, following the abolition of the death penalty in law by the parliament in Mauritius on 3 August 1995 and just two months after South Africa's Constitutional Court ruled it was unconstitutional," Amnesty International said.

Mauritius' decision to abolish the death penalty had tipped the global balance towards abolition, resulting in a majority of 98 countries worldwide that had eliminated capital punishment either in law or in practice.

In 1993 Amnesty International welcomed the abolition of the death penalty in Gambia as a clear indication of the country's commitment to human rights. Today, Amnesty International is urging the authorities in Gambia, who came to power in a military coup in July 1994, to reconsider their decision.

"None of the studies carried out in various countries have proved that the death penalty has any special deterrent effect compared with other punishments," the human rights organization said.

Amnesty International considers that the death penalty violates the inalienable right to life and constitutes a cruel and inhuman punishment. Consequently, the movement for the abolition of the death penalty cannot be separated from the struggle for human rights.

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