

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **GHANA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES THE COMMUTATION OF ALL DEATH SENTENCES**

Amnesty International welcomes the commutation of all death sentences by the outgoing President John Kufuor and urges the new President of Ghana, John Atta Mills, to seize the moment and take immediate steps to abolish the death penalty in law.

The organisation commends Ghana on its moratorium on executions and the regular commutation of death sentences and now calls on President John Atta Mills to make further commitments on human rights by taking concrete steps to full abolition.

As of today, 138 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice. The continent of Africa is largely free of executions, with only seven of the 53 African Union member states known to have carried out executions in 2007: Botswana, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Libya, Somalia and Sudan.

In Ghana, in recent years, several influential figures have voiced their opposition to the death penalty, including the former Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Mr Joe Ghartey, who is reported to have said in 2007 that the death penalty has no deterrent effect. In meetings with Amnesty International in April 2008, the former Minister of Justice as well as members of Parliament underlined the need for a debate around death penalty in Ghana. While no death row prisoner has been executed since 1993, the death penalty continues to be in the statute books and death sentences continue to be imposed. In 2008, 3 people were sentenced to death and approximately 105 prisoners were on death row, including three women.

Amnesty International has made the abolition of the death penalty one of the key points in a seven point human rights agenda for the new President.