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UKRAINE: 1996 EXECUTION FIGURE -- SECOND HIGHEST IN THE WORLD--
REVEALS INTERNATIONAL ABOLITION COMMITMENT BEING OPENLY FLOUTED

Amnesty International was appalled to learn on Friday that Ukraine executed 167 people in 1996, including prisoners sentenced to death in previous years, placing Ukraine second only to China for the highest known number of executions in the world.

This figure was issued by the head of the Department of Organizational Support to Courts at the Ministry of Justice on 29 January and was revealed to Amnesty International on Friday. She also said that 167 people had been sentenced to death in 1996 and in only two cases had sentences been commuted.

“The Ukrainian Government has pledged to the Council of Europe to stop executions and abolish the death penalty. Once again we urge them to honour this pledge immediately,” Amnesty International said.

A resolution by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 29 January strongly condemned the continuing executions in Ukraine. The information on the number of executions carried out was not provided to the Council of Europe prior to the Parliamentary Assembly discussion of this issue.

On 28 January, the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers submitted draft legislation to parliament which provides for the establishment of a moratorium on executions. Amnesty International is afraid, however, that more people could be executed before this legislation comes into effect. The organization urges President Leonid Kuchma to immediately publicly announce the existence of an official moratorium on executions, and formalize the decision by issuing public orders to all prison governors that no further executions are to be carried out.

Point 6 of the Resolution passed by the Parliamentary Assembly on 29 January clearly warns the Ukrainian Government of the consequences should they continue to violate their obligations to the Council of Europe in the matter of the death penalty. This includes possible expulsion of the Ukrainian parliamentary delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly.
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