

# Press Release

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## **Council of Europe Secretary General: Death penalty is a fatal form of injustice**

Brussels, 10.10.2006 - Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe and Franco Frattini, Vice President of the European Commission held today a joint press conference in Brussels to mark the World Day against the Death Penalty. On this occasion, Terry Davis said:

"Death penalty is a fatal form of injustice and a fatal violation of human rights. You cannot have a genuinely civilised and humane society if the state is uncivilised and inhumane.

Death penalty is barbaric. It does not deter crime. It does not help the victims of crime. It transforms murderers into martyrs. It transforms judicial errors into irreversible tragedies. The bottom line is – the next time that judicial error may be you.

The European Convention on Human Rights and its protocols guarantee the right to life and prohibit torture, degrading and inhuman treatment. Death penalty violates that Convention.

The Council of Europe has been working for the past 30 years to outlaw the death penalty in Europe. Since 1989, abolition has been set as a formal condition for accession for all new members. 45 of the 46 member states have formally abolished the death penalty. We expect the Russian Federation will soon follow suit. Meanwhile it has had a moratorium since it joined in 1996. As a result, there has not been a single execution in any member states of the Council of Europe for 10 years. In the whole of Europe, only Belarus is out of step.

But, as far as I am concerned, the abolition of the death penalty is still an unfinished business. First, many Europeans are still in favour of the death penalty. This is not something we can ignore. We need to go out and explain to people why the death penalty is wrong, why it has been abolished and why it should stay abolished. This is an area where the Council of Europe and the European Commission can work together and, I hope, will work together.

Second, we must look beyond Europe. Some of our closest friends and allies continue to execute people. We all know that the decision to abolish the death penalty must come from them. But until they decide to do so – and eventually, they will - we should not remain silent. Politely but persistently, we should encourage them to follow our example and say yes to justice but no to cruelty, torture and death."

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**A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 46 member states.**