

# Press Release

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## **The end of 2006 marks another year without the death penalty in Europe**

**Statement by Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

Strasbourg, 01.01.2007 - "The last few days have been dominated by the macabre spectacle of Saddam Hussein's execution, but they have also marked the end of another year without the death penalty anywhere in the civilised and democratic part of Europe. During the past twelve months nobody has been hanged, poisoned, decapitated, electrocuted, shot or killed by the state in any other way in the 46 members of the Council of Europe. This is a major victory for human decency and human rights.

The European Convention of Human Rights, which provides the legal basis for the ban on capital punishment everywhere in Europe except for Belarus, is an inspiration for a growing number of countries in the world. There is no doubt that the abolition of death penalty is following the path of the abolition of slavery and will eventually become a universally accepted value and norm.

The end of 2006 also brought some encouraging developments in the United States of America, confirming the slow but steady trend towards abolition in one of only two Council of Europe observer countries which continue to execute people. Even if the recent ruling of a court in California only challenged the legality of the way in which people are put to death, it will eventually become clear that capital punishment cannot be fixed and should be rejected on grounds of justice as much as morality.

Finally, I must deplore the sudden burst of executions in Japan, which also enjoys observer status with the Council of Europe. The recent hangings, which came after a long period without executions, have put Japan at odds with all those civilised countries which have already abolished this inhuman and barbaric form of punishment."

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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.**