

# Press Release

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### Terry Davis: "The abolition of the death penalty in Europe is far too important to be taken for granted"

*Excerpts from the speech by Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis at the international conference against the death penalty organised by the Council of Europe, the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union and the European Commission.*

Lisbon, 09.10.2007 – "The year 2007 marks a decade without the death penalty in the member states of the Council of Europe. It means that no one has been hanged, poisoned, decapitated, electrocuted, shot or otherwise killed by criminal justice systems during the last 10 years anywhere in Europe except in Belarus, which is not a member of the Council of Europe."

But our work is not yet done. The abolition of the death penalty is far too important to be taken for granted.

We know that there are many people in Europe who continue to support the death penalty. Every time there is a particularly gruesome crime, or, in some cases, when election is coming - there are voices calling for the death penalty to be reinstated.

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. The European Day against the Death Penalty provides an opportunity to do so.

Europe's second priority is to demonstrate that there is no contradiction between the effective fight against crime, including terrorism, and a criminal justice system which respects human rights.

Our final priority is the death penalty elsewhere in the world. Some of our closest friends and observers at the Council of Europe continue to execute people.

It is for all these reasons that the Council of Europe has decided to hold the European Day against the Death Penalty every year on 10 October. The abolition of the death penalty in Europe is the pinnacle of our progress in the defence of human dignity and human rights. The European Day against the Death Penalty will help us to make progress towards the day, in a not too distant future, when the death penalty will be eradicated throughout the world."

For the full text of the speech and more information, see [www.coe.int/deathpenalty](http://www.coe.int/deathpenalty).

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