

Speaking Points for Ms. Delphine Schantz
Representative, New York Liaison Office (NYLO), UNODC
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Social and human rights questions: crime prevention and criminal justice

Presentation of the 11th Quinquennial Report
**Capital punishment and implementation of the safeguards guaranteeing
protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty.**
Report of the Secretary General

Thank you, Mr. President.

Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, it is my pleasure to present the eleventh Quinquennial Report of the Secretary-General on “Capital punishment and implementation of the safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty,” contained in document E/2025/75.

The report before you reviews developments in the use of capital punishment over the course of the quinquennium 2019 to 2023, pursuant to Economic and Social Council Resolutions 1745 (LIV) of 16 May 1973 and Council decision 2005/247 of 22 July 2005.

The report also provides updates on the implementation of the safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, which apply to States that retain capital punishment, in accordance with Council resolution 1989/64 of 24 May 1989 and 1995/57 of 28 July 1995.

To ensure a comprehensive, well-rounded understanding of the issues at hand, all United Nations Member States were invited to contribute to the report by means of a detailed questionnaire. Questionnaires were returned by fifty-six States.

In accordance with resolution 1995/57, to ensure a thorough review of all available data, the report further drew on current criminological research, the expertise of specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations holding consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, summary reports of high-level panel discussions requested by the Human Rights Council and annual reports submitted by the Secretary-General at the request of the General Assembly.

Documents produced in the course of the universal periodic review as well as those produced by treaty bodies and the special procedures of the Council also provided valuable information.

On the basis of its findings, the present report confirms the trend documented in previous reports towards abolition or the restricted use of capital punishment in most countries. Over the course of the quinquennium, the number of States and territories having abolished the death penalty in law and practice continued to grow.

As of 31 December 2023, 117 States had abolished the death penalty in law while another 44 were deemed to be abolitionist de facto. In most of the 30 States where the death penalty continued to be practised, there was a measurable decline in its use.

The Secretary-General welcomes the global trend towards the abolition of the death penalty as well as efforts aimed at the progressive development of international law that contribute to that goal. To this end, States are encouraged to consider establishing moratoriums on executions, with a view to total abolition of the death penalty, and to ensure greater transparency in reporting of its continued application.

With regards to the safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, the Secretary General expresses concern that death sentences were imposed in cases where the “most serious crimes” standard was not met and in cases of trials that did not comply with international standards.

Greater attention should be also given to the issue of women and other groups in vulnerable situations sentenced to death, as well as members of the families of those sentenced to death and executed, in particular their children, while ensuring that all international safeguards protecting the rights of those facing executions are upheld.

In this spirit, the Secretary General invites the Economic and Social Council and Member States to consider the recommendations put forward in the report under VI. Conclusions and recommendations, paragraph 159 (a-j).

To conclude, I wish to re-affirm the United Nation’s commitment to promoting justice and supporting Member States in strengthening fair, transparent and accountable criminal justice responses, particularly in matters involving the death penalty, in line with the United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice.

Thank you very much for your attention.

4 minutes

(627 words)