Resolution 1097 (1996)[1]

Abolition of the death penalty in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls its Resolution 1044 (1994) on the abolition of capital punishment. It welcomes the complete abolition of capital punishment in Italy, Spain, Moldova and Belgium during the last two years, which provide an excellent example for other countries to follow.

2. The Assembly deplores the executions which, reportedly, have been carried out recently in Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine. In particular, it condemns Ukraine for apparently violating its commitments to introduce a moratorium on executions of the death penalty upon its accession to the Council of Europe. It also regrets that Latvia has not kept its commitment to ratify Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights within one year of its accession to the Council of Europe.

3. Having heard that the moratorium on executions to which Russia committed itself during its accession procedure is in danger of being broken, the Assembly demands that Russia honour its commitment and carry out no executions. It makes particular reference to the forty-six prisoners on "death row" whose requests for pardon have reportedly been rejected by the President of the Russian Federation this year.

4. The Assembly calls upon Russia, Ukraine and Latvia to honour their commitments regarding the introduction of a moratorium on executions and the immediate abolition of capital punishment. It warns these countries that further violation of their commitments, especially the carrying out of executions, will have consequences under Order No. 508 (1995).

5. In view of the irrefutable arguments against the imposition of capital punishment, the Assembly furthermore urges Lithuania to institute a moratorium on executions without delay. It calls upon those Council of Europe member states who retain the death penalty on their statute books without taking recourse to it (Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Malta, Poland, Turkey, United Kingdom) to abolish it de jure as soon as possible. It also invites all member states of the Council of Europe who have not yet done so to sign and ratify Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights.

6. With reference to Resolution 1044 (1994), the Assembly reminds applicant states to the Council of Europe that the willingness to sign and ratify Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights and to introduce a moratorium upon accession has become a prerequisite for membership of the Council of Europe on the part of the Assembly. It thus recommends applicant states to review their policy on capital punishment in time.

7. The Assembly declares its willingness to assist those countries wanting to abolish the death penalty in their task, and will continue to follow developments very closely.

8. In the interest of building a world based on respect for life, human rights and the rule of law, the Assembly calls upon all the parliaments in the world which have not yet done so to abolish the death penalty for all crimes before the end of this millennium, following the example of most of the Council of Europe states.

9. Finally, the Assembly pleads with all heads of state and all parliaments in whose countries death penalties are handed down to grant clemency to the convicted.

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1. Assembly debate on 28 June 1996 (24th Sitting) (see Doc. 7589, report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mrs Wohlwend). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 June 1996 (24th Sitting).