Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1187 (1999)[1]

Europe: a death penalty-free continent

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly, referring to its Resolutions 1044 (1994) and 1097 (1996), reaffirms its belief that the application of the death penalty constitutes inhuman and degrading punishment and a violation of the most fundamental human right, that to life itself. It reiterates its firm conviction that capital punishment therefore has no place in civilised, democratic societies governed by the rule of law.

2. The Assembly is heartened by the fact that the number of executions in Council of Europe member states is steadily diminishing – from eighteen in 1997 (of which thirteen took place in Ukraine and five in the Russian Federation (Chechnya)) to a single one in 1998 (in the Russian Federation (Chechnya)).

3. The Assembly is similarly encouraged by recent positive developments in several member states. It is pleased that, following ratification by Belgium, Greece, Latvia and the United Kingdom, thirty-two member state s have ratified Protocol No. 6. Also, since the signature of Protocol No. 6 by Bulgaria, Cyprus and Lithuania, only four member states are not signatories of the protocol, namely, Albania, Georgia, Poland and Turkey. Further, it congratulates Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Poland and the United Kingdom on their total abolition in domestic law of the death penalty and it regrets that four member states – Albania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine – still maintain the death penalty on their statute books.

4. However, the Assembly is concerned that three member states, namely Albania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, still maintain prisoners on death row in violation of their commitment to abolish the death penalty within a certain delay following accession to the Council of Europe.

5. In particular, the Assembly condemns, and in the strongest possible terms, the executions that have taken place in Chechnya as a consequence of a fundamentalist interpretation of the Sharia. It calls on the responsible authorities to fully respect the moratorium on executions instituted by the Russian Federation.

6. These member states must realise that the Assembly is unwilling to reconsider their commitments with regard to the abolition of the death penalty. On the contrary, the Assembly will use all means at its disposal to ensure that commitments freely entered into are honoured.

7. It thus asks Albania, the Russian Federation and Ukraine that they ratify Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights, under no circumstances whatsoever carry out any executions, and commute the sentence of all those condemned to death as soon as the death penalty is abolished. It acknowledges the efforts of the members of the Latvian Parliament in this respect and urges them to pursue total abolition.

8. Moreover, it urges all member states of the Council of Europe which have not yet done so, to sign and/or ratify Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights, in order that Europe may enter the third millennium as an execution – and death penalty – free zone.

9. Finally, the Assembly decides – and calls on the whole of the Council of Europe, including the Committee of Ministers to do likewise – to offer full assistance to member states experiencing difficulties in abolishing the death penalty, in particular by disseminating information and by organising awareness-raising seminars aimed at assuring support from governmental and non-governmental circles.

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1. See Doc. 8340, report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mrs Wohlwend. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 26 May 1999.