

# 'Put an end to the death penalty now', urges Guterres, marking World Day

Progress made toward eliminating the death penalty has been “marred by setbacks,” said [United Nations Secretary-General](#) António Guterres in a statement on Wednesday, marking the 16th World Day Against the Death Penalty.

He noted that hundreds of offenders – often impoverished, women or hailing from minority groups – have been executed without legal representation or transparent criminal proceedings, which might have spared them from the death penalty.

“In some countries, people are sentenced to death in secret trials, without due process, increasing the potential for error or abuse” – UN chief Guterres

Some 170 States have abolished or put a stay on executions, since the UN [General Assembly's](#) first call for a moratorium on its use, in 2007. Mr. Guterres noted the lack of transparency in some countries where the death penalty is still used, underscoring its incompatibility with human rights standards.

Mr. Guterres said he was “deeply disturbed” in particular, by the number of juvenile offenders being executed. Only last week, Zeinab Sekaanvand Lokran of Iran, was executed for killing her husband, when she was 17, despite a trial marred by irregularities.

“In some countries, people are sentenced to death in secret trials, without due process, increasing the potential for error or abuse” said the UN chief.

These comments echo those of UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour. In an interview with UN News last November, he said there was “far too much secrecy, and it’s quite indicative of the fact that although many countries are giving up the practice, those that retain it, nevertheless feel that they have something to hide.”

He noted the majority of executions today are carried out in China, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Guterres concluded with a call for all nations to abolish the practice of executions. “I call on those remaining, to join the majority and put an end to the death penalty now,” he added.