



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND BELARUS

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council
Vienna, 13 December 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I am speaking on behalf of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Norway.

Three OSCE participating States maintain the death penalty in law, but have moratoriums on executions. Two participating States, the United States of America and Belarus, retain the death penalty in both law and in practice.

Since we last raised this issue on 14 June, thirteen executions have been carried out in the United States of America. The State of Texas has executed seven individuals. The State of Tennessee has executed three individuals. In addition, the states of Nebraska, South Dakota, and Ohio have each executed one individual. While most executions were carried out by lethal injection, the two most recent executions in Tennessee were carried out by electrocution. In 2018, 24 executions have been carried out in the United States of America so far.

At the end of November, it became known that Belarus recently has executed two individuals, bringing the number of known executions in Belarus to four this year. We remain concerned about the lack of transparency regarding the death penalty and its application in Belarus.

Our countries oppose the death penalty in all cases and without exception. We consider the death penalty to be a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, incompatible with human rights and human dignity. It is also irreversible. Through the application of the death penalty, retentionist states show willingness to risk perpetuating the miscarriage of justice. There is an inherent risk of mistake in all criminal justice systems; innocent people are at times wrongfully convicted and executed. Moreover, it is well documented that capital punishment does not itself deter crime.

More than two out of three countries worldwide have now abolished the death penalty by law or in practice. On 13 November, the United Nations adopted a resolution on a moratorium against the death penalty with a record high 123 states voting in favour. Only one OSCE participating state voted against. The vote has demonstrated that there is a global trend to move away from the use of the death penalty.

We strongly urge the United States and Belarus to suspend all executions, take immediate steps towards abolition, and join our efforts to free our region of the death penalty.