



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

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

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad at the Permanent Council

Vienna, 6 September 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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

Only two participating States, the United States of America and Belarus, retain the death penalty in both law and in practice.

There is a growing global trend to move away from the use of the death penalty. More than two out of three countries worldwide have abolished the death penalty by law or in practice. Last year, the United Nations adopted a resolution with a record-high number of states voting in favour of a moratorium on the death penalty. In March, California introduced a gubernatorial moratorium on executions. In May, New Hampshire became the 21st state in the USA to abolish the death penalty.

Nevertheless, on 25 July, the Government of the United States announced that it will end its *de facto* moratorium of 16 years and resume executions; five have been scheduled for the coming months. So far, 13 individuals have been executed in the United States in 2019.

In June, it was reported that Belarus carried out its first execution of 2019, with additional reports of a second execution having been carried out. At least two persons have been sentenced to death in 2019. We remain concerned about the lack of transparency regarding the death penalty and its application in Belarus

We oppose the death penalty in all cases without exception. The death penalty is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, incompatible with human rights and human dignity. It does not itself deter crime and it is irreversible. States that retain the death penalty risk perpetuating the miscarriage of justice. Wrongful conviction is a regrettable, but inherent, risk of every criminal justice system. Execution of innocents need not be and should not be.

We continue to call on both Belarus and the United States of America to suspend all executions, take immediate, further steps towards abolition, and join our efforts to free our region of the death penalty.