


INTERNATIONAL



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Record number of states vote for UN resolution on death penalty moratorium

117 states voted for international freeze on executions, leaving the US increasingly isolated with 'no' vote

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by [Natasja Sheriff](#)

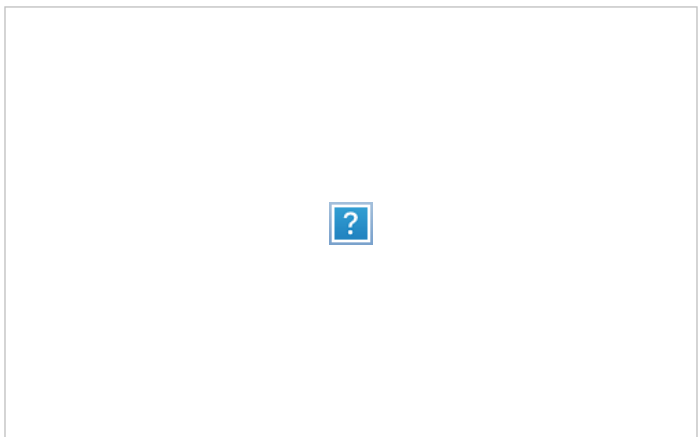
The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution Thursday calling for an international moratorium on the use of the death penalty. The resolution passed with a record 117 votes in favor, with the United States, along with 37 other nations, opposing the move.

Support for the resolution, which is nonbinding, has increased steadily since it was first adopted in 2007, when 104 states lodged a “yes” vote; this is the fifth time the General Assembly has voted on the issue. Last time the resolution went before the General Assembly, in 2012, it received support from 111 countries. The final tally today also shows an uptick even from Nov. 21, when the draft resolution [received 114 votes in favor in the U.N.’s social, humanitarian and cultural committee](#).

“The numbers don’t look huge, two or three states every year,” said Chiara Sangiorgio, death penalty expert at Amnesty International, “but in time it is significant that support [for the resolution] is definitely increasing.”

This year, Eritrea, Fiji, Niger and Suriname moved from an abstention to a “yes” vote; Equatorial Guinea, Kiribati and Sao Tome-Principe also added their support. Bahrain, Myanmar, Tonga and Uganda moved from a ‘no’ vote to an abstention.

One key addition to the 2014 resolution focuses on the rights of foreign nationals who are detained or arrested abroad. The new clause calls on member states to respect their obligations under article 36 of the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. The convention requires that states notify a detained foreign national of their right to inform their consulate or embassy of their detention.



United Nations vote on death penalty moratorium puts US in awkward spot

The General Assembly has passed four resolutions on an execution moratorium, with the US increasingly isolated for use

In 2004, the International Court of Justice ruled that the U.S. violated the 1963 Convention by not informing 51 Mexican nationals, held by the U.S., of their rights to notify the Mexican consulate of their detention. Edgar Tamayo and Ramiro Hernandez, two of the Mexican nationals the ruling referred to, were nonetheless executed in Texas earlier this year.

But, said Sangiorgio, the plight of foreign nationals on death row goes well beyond the United States.

“We see that it is often drug mules that are getting the death penalty, for instance in Southeast Asia, and we’ve seen the plight of domestic workers in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries, where they are exposed to a judicial process that often is carried out in a language that they do not understand,” said Sangiorgio.

Consular assistance can provide critical legal representation to a foreign national detained overseas, particularly if they face the death penalty.

Thursday’s resolution also urged states not to impose the death penalty on people with mental or intellectual disabilities. Previous resolution included restrictions on the use of the capital punishment for children under 18 years old and pregnant women.

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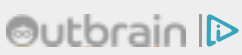
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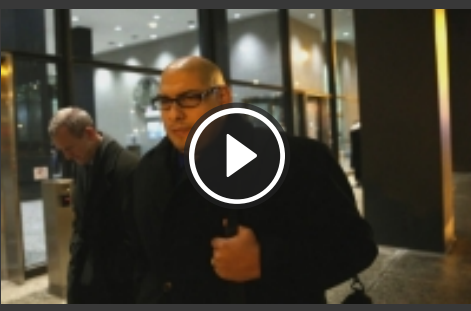
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