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AI – Amnesty International

Gambia: 22 death sentences commuted to life imprisonment, a welcome step towards abolition

Responding to the news that Gambia’s President Adama Barrow has commuted the death sentences of 22 prisoners to life imprisonment, Marie-Evelyne Petrus Barry, Amnesty International West and Central Africa Regional Director-who met with the Gambian President last week- said:

“The President’s commutation of these death sentences to life imprisonment is an important milestone for Gambia which is slowly and steadily moving away from the death penalty.

“Less than a week ago, Amnesty International met with President Adama Barrow who confirmed to us his commitment to outlaw this cruel punishment – it’s good to see him take another concrete step against the death penalty.

“This decision is a positive step, however we want the authorities to go further by abolishing the death penalty for all crimes without delay, including in the country’s future constitution.

“We also hope they will implement our recommendations to repeal draconian media laws, reform the security sector and end discrimination against women.”

Background

Gambia’s Attorney General and Justice Minister, Aboubacarr Tambadou, said yesterday that President Adama Barrow has commuted the death sentences of 22 prisoners to life imprisonment.

This followed an Amnesty International mission (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/05/gambia-key-human-rights-concerns/>) to Gambia to present to the authorities a series of recommendations covering 10 areas of reform to protect and promote human rights. (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr27/0227/2019/en/>) The recommendations include the abolition of the death penalty and commutation of all death sentences to terms of imprisonment.

In February 2018, President Adama Barrow announced the establishment of an official moratorium on executions. In September 2018, Gambia ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty thus becoming the 86th State Party to the treaty.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature of the crime, the characteristics of the offender, or the method used by the state to kill the prisoner. The death penalty violates the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

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ecoi.net summary:

Death sentences of 22 prisoners commuted to life imprisonment



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