

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GLOBAL REPORT

DEATH SENTENCES

AND EXECUTIONS

2019

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



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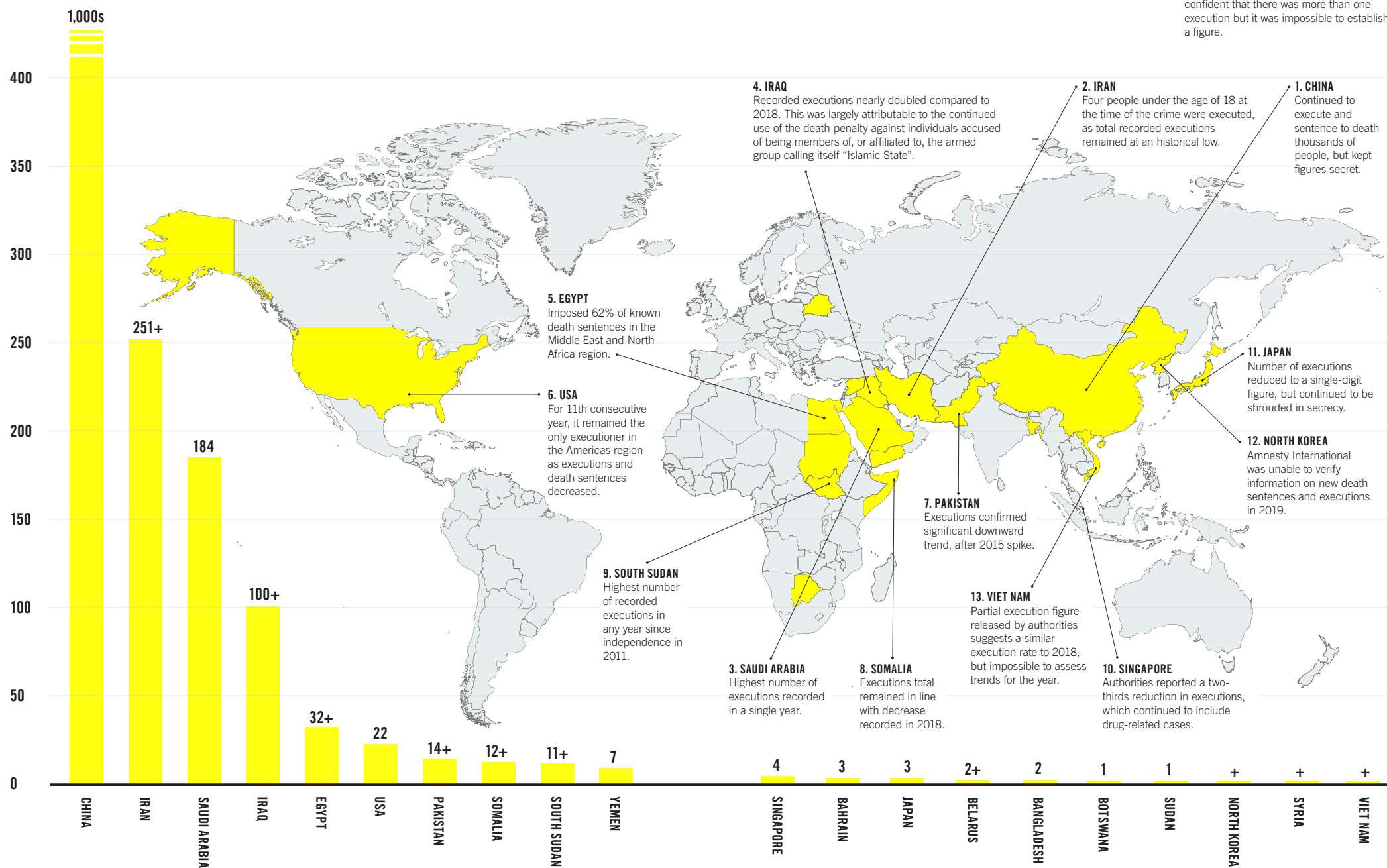
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EXECUTING COUNTRIES IN 2019



NOTE ON AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S FIGURES ON THE USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY

This report covers the judicial use of the death penalty for the period January to December 2019. As in previous years, information is collected from a variety of sources, including: official figures; judgments; information from individuals sentenced to death and their families and representatives; media reports; and, for a limited number of countries, other civil society organizations. Amnesty International reports only on executions, death sentences and other aspects of the use of the death penalty, such as commutations and exonerations, where there is reasonable confirmation. In many countries governments do not publish information on their use of the death penalty. In Belarus, China and Viet Nam, data on the use of the death penalty is classified as a state secret. During 2019 little or no information was available on some countries – in particular Laos and North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) – due to restrictive state practice.

Therefore, for many countries, Amnesty International's figures on the use of the death penalty are minimum figures. The true figures are likely to be higher. Where the organization obtains official information on a specific country in a given year, this is noted in the report.

In 2009 Amnesty International stopped publishing its estimated figures on the use of the death penalty in China, a decision that reflected concerns about how the Chinese authorities misrepresented Amnesty International's numbers. Amnesty International always made clear that the figures it was able to publish on China were significantly lower than the reality, because of the restrictions on access to information. China has yet to publish any figures on the death penalty; however, available information indicates that each year thousands of people are executed and sentenced to death. Amnesty International renews its call on the Chinese authorities to publish information on the use of the death penalty in China.

Where Amnesty International receives and is able to verify new information after publication of this report, it updates its figures online at www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty

In tables and lists, where “+” appears after a figure next to the name of a country – for example, Thailand (16+) – it means that Amnesty International confirmed 16 executions, death sentences or persons under sentence of death in Thailand but believes that there were more than 16. Where “+” appears after a country name without a figure – for instance, Syria (+) – it means that Amnesty International has corroborated executions, death sentences or persons under sentence of death (more than one) in that country but had insufficient information to provide a credible minimum figure. When calculating global and regional totals, “+” has been counted as 2, including for China.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. The organization campaigns for total abolition of capital punishment.

During the year death sentences were confirmed in 56 countries, two more than in 2018, when 54 countries were known to have imposed death sentences.

In 2019 four countries were known to have imposed death sentences after a hiatus – Malawi, Maldives, Niger and Trinidad and Tobago. Unlike in previous years when Amnesty International was unable to confirm death sentences in Syria, the organization confirmed that death sentences were imposed in the country in 2019 but had insufficient information to provide a credible minimum figure.⁹ During the year no new death sentences were recorded in three countries – Chad, Libya and Papua New Guinea – where death sentences were recorded in 2018.

DEATH SENTENCES RECORDED GLOBALLY IN 2019

Afghanistan (14), Algeria (4+), Bahrain (4+), Bangladesh (220+), Belarus (3+), Botswana (4), China (+), Democratic Republic of the Congo (8), Egypt (435+), Gambia (1), Ghana (8), Guyana (2), India (102), Indonesia (80+), Iran (+), Iraq (87+), Japan (2), Jordan (8+), Kenya (29+), Kuwait (5+), Lebanon (23), Malawi (8), Malaysia (26+), Maldives (2), Mali (4+), Mauritania (8), Morocco/Western Sahara (7+), Myanmar (4), Niger (8), Nigeria (54+), North Korea (+), Oman (7+), Pakistan (632+), Palestine (State of: 4, Hamas authorities, Gaza), Qatar (2+), Saudi Arabia (5+), Sierra Leone (21), Singapore (12), Somalia (24+), South Korea (1), South Sudan (4+), Sri Lanka (34+), Sudan (31+), Syria (+), Taiwan (2), Tanzania (4+), Thailand (16+), Trinidad and Tobago (8), Tunisia (39+), Uganda (2), United Arab Emirates (18+), USA (35), Viet Nam (76+), Yemen (55), Zambia (101), Zimbabwe (6).



Significant decreases in the number of death sentences imposed were recorded in the following countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo (from 41 to 8), Egypt (from 717+ to 435+), India (from 162 to 102), Iraq (from 271+ to 87+), Kuwait (from 34 to 5+), Libya (from 45+ to 0), Mali (from 18 to 4+), Palestine (State of) (from 13 to 4), Thailand (from 33+ to 16+).

On the other hand, Amnesty International recorded a significant increase in the number of death sentences imposed in 2019 compared to 2018 in the following countries: Indonesia (from 48+ to 80+), Kenya (from 12+ to 29+), Lebanon (from 5+ to 23), Pakistan (from 250+ to 632+), Sierra Leone (from 4 to 21), Sudan (from 8 to 31+), Tunisia (from 12+ to 39+), Yemen (from 13+ to 55), Zambia (from 21+ to 101).

Globally, at least 26,604 people were known to be under sentence of death at the end of 2019.¹⁰

⁹ Due to the ongoing conflict, Amnesty International could not confirm that death sentences were carried out in Syria in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018

¹⁰ For several countries where Amnesty International believed a high number of prisoners were under sentence of death figures were not available or it was impossible to estimate an adequate number. These included China, Egypt, Iran, North Korea and Saudi Arabia.

COMMUTATIONS, PARDONS AND EXONERATIONS

Amnesty International recorded commutations or pardons of death sentences in 24 countries:

Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco/Western Sahara, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Singapore, Sudan, Thailand, UAE, USA, Zambia, Zimbabwe.¹¹

Amnesty International recorded at least 11 exonerations of prisoners under sentence of death in two countries –USA (3), Zambia (8).¹²

THE DEATH PENALTY IN 2019: IN VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

The death penalty continued to be used in ways that violated international law and standards in 2019. Some examples included:

- At least 13 **public executions** were recorded in Iran.
- At least 6 people – 4 in Iran, 1 in Saudi Arabia and 1 in South Sudan – were executed for crimes that occurred when they were **below 18 years of age**; Amnesty International believed that other people in this category remained on death row in Maldives, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and South Sudan.¹³
- People with **mental or intellectual disabilities** were under sentence of death in several countries, including Japan, Maldives, Pakistan and USA.
- Death sentences were known to have been imposed after proceedings that did not meet **international fair trial standards** in several countries, including Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Viet Nam and Yemen.
- **“Confessions”** that may have been extracted through **torture or other ill-treatment** were used to convict and sentence people to death in Bahrain, Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia.
- Death sentences were imposed **without the defendant being present (in absentia)** in Bangladesh and Lebanon.

11 Commutation is the process by which a death sentence is exchanged for a less severe sentence such as terms of imprisonment, often by the judiciary on appeal, but sometimes also by the executive. A pardon is granted when the convicted individual is completely exempted from further punishment.

12 Exoneration is the process whereby, after sentencing and the conclusion of the appeals process, the convicted person is later cleared from blame or acquitted of the criminal charge, and therefore is regarded as innocent in the eyes of the law

13 Often the actual age of the prisoner is in dispute because no clear proof of age exists, such as a certificate of registration at birth. Governments should apply a full range of appropriate criteria in cases where age is in dispute. Good practice in assessing age includes drawing on knowledge of physical, psychological and social development. Each of these criteria should be applied in a way that gives the benefit of the doubt in disputed cases so that the individual is treated as a person who was below 18 years of age at the time of the crime, and accordingly should ensure that the death penalty is not applied. Such an approach is consistent with the principle that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, as required by Article 3(1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

REGIONAL TRENDS

- Recorded executions increased by 16%, driven by significant increases in Iraq and Saudi Arabia.
- Seven countries carried out executions with Bahrain resuming executions after a one-year hiatus.
- Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq remained the top executing countries in the region, accounting for 92% of executions.
- There was a 40% drop in recorded death sentences, mainly due to reductions in Egypt and Iraq.
- Egypt imposed 62% of known death sentences in the region despite a drop in recorded death sentences in the country.

COUNTRY	2019 RECORDED EXECUTIONS	2019 RECORDED DEATH SENTENCES	PEOPLE KNOWN TO BE UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH AT THE END OF 2019
Algeria	0	4+	+
Bahrain	3	4+	28+
Egypt	32+	435+	+
Iran	251+	+	+
Iraq	100+	87+	8,000+ ¹⁰⁰
Israel	0	0	0
Jordan	0	8+	8+
Kuwait	0	5+	+
Lebanon	0	23	47+
Libya	0	0	+
Morocco/Western Sahara	0	7+	+
Oman	0	7+	+
Palestine (State of)	0	4 ¹⁰¹	+
Qatar	0	2+	+
Saudi Arabia	184	5+	+
Syria	+	+	+
Tunisia	0	39+	+
United Arab Emirates	0	18+	+
Yemen	7	55	+

100 "Iraq has executed 100 since January, 8,000 on death row: official", Rudaw, 19 August 2019, www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/190820191

101 These death sentences were imposed by courts run by the Hamas de facto administration in the Gaza Strip

In **Iraq**, Amnesty International recorded 100 executions and 87 death sentences.¹¹³ All the recorded executions were carried out by the Iraqi central authorities. According to the information received from the authorities of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, no executions were carried out in the region but 45 death sentences were imposed and 13 commutations were granted. Throughout the year the mandatory death penalty was used under anti-terrorism laws for a wide range of acts that do not meet the “most serious crimes” threshold required under international law. In this regard the UN reported that imposition of the death sentences in these types of cases often followed unfair trials.¹¹⁴

Kuwait commuted five death sentences during the year. An Indian national, Arjun Athimuthu, had his death sentence commuted to life imprisonment and a Kuwaiti national had his death sentence commuted by an appeal court to 15 years in prison, which was upheld by the Court of Cassation. The death sentences of the three other people (one from India, one from Pakistan and one of unknown nationality) were commuted to life imprisonment.

According to information received by Amnesty International from the government of **Lebanon**, since January 2004 no executions have been carried out in the country. The government stated that 23 death sentences were imposed, 17 of which were imposed in the absence of the accused. The commutation applications of four people were still being considered at the end of the year. Sixteen foreign nationals were under sentence of death, 13 of whom had their death sentences imposed in their absence.

In **Morocco/Western Sahara** King Mohammed VI commuted one death sentence to life imprisonment as part of the celebrations for the 75th Anniversary of the Manifesto of Independence.¹¹⁵ No executions have been carried out since 1993; the courts imposed at least seven death sentences in 2019.

The government of **Oman** informed Amnesty International that no executions were carried out and that death sentence(s) were imposed in 2019 but did not specify the number. Amnesty International recorded seven death sentences reported by the media.¹¹⁶ The authorities commuted one death sentence to eight years’ imprisonment in a murder case because the family of the victim accepted *diya* (“blood money”).

In **Saudi Arabia**, 184 executions – of six women and 178 men – were carried out; this was the highest number of executions recorded by Amnesty International in one year in the country. Eighty-four of the executions were for drug-related offences; 55 for murder; 37 for terrorism-related offences; five for rape; two for beating and rape; and one for armed robbery and rape. Of the 184 people executed in 2019, 88 were Saudi Arabian nationals. The others – a majority of 52% – were foreign nationals from the following countries: Afghanistan (1); Ethiopia (1); Philippines (1); Somalia (1); Turkey (1); Bahrain (2); India (2); Chad (3); Jordan (5); Nigeria (5); Egypt (6); Syria (10); Yemen (20); Pakistan (35); and three people whose nationality was not known.

113 “Iraq has executed 100 since January, 8,000 on death row: official”, Rudaw, 19 August 2019, www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/190820191

114 United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Human rights in the administration of justice in Iraq: Trials under the anti-terrorism laws and implications for justice, accountability and social cohesion in the aftermath of ISIL*, January 2020, www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_Report_HRAAdministrationJustice_Iraq_28January2020.pdf

115 “King of Morocco pardons 783 prisoners”, Royal Central, 13 January 2019, <https://royalcentral.co.uk/international/king-of-morocco-pardons-783-prisoners-114089/>

116 “Death sentences in the case of wife who killed husband”, *Atheer*, 6 May 2019, www.atheer.om/archives/497948/; “An Omani court issues a death sentence for 5 people on this charge”, *Watanserb*, 25 February 2019, www.watanserb.com/2019/02/25/

RECORDED DEATH SENTENCES IN 2019

China 1,000s	Sierra Leone 21	Bahrain 4+
Pakistan 632+	UAE 18+	Mali 4+
Egypt 435+	Thailand 16+	Tanzania 4+
Bangladesh 220+	Afghanistan 14	South Sudan 4+
India 102	Singapore 12	Botswana 4
Zambia 101	Jordan 8+	Myanmar 4
Iraq 87+	Democratic Republic of the Congo 8	Palestine (State of) 4
Indonesia 80+	Ghana 8	Belarus 3+
Viet Nam 76+	Malawi 8	Qatar 2+
Yemen 55	Mauritania 8	Guyana 2
Nigeria 54+	Niger 8	Japan 2
Tunisia 39+	Trinidad and Tobago 8	Maldives 2
USA 35	Morocco/Western Sahara 7+	Taiwan 2
Sri Lanka 34+	Oman 7+	Uganda 2
Sudan 31+	Zimbabwe 6	Gambia 1
Kenya 29+	Kuwait 5+	South Korea 1
Malaysia 26+	Saudi Arabia 5+	Iran +
Somalia 24+	Algeria 4+	North Korea +
Lebanon 23		Syria +

2. ABOLITIONIST FOR ORDINARY CRIMES ONLY

Countries whose laws provide for the death penalty only for exceptional crimes such as crimes under military law or crimes committed in exceptional circumstances:¹⁵³

Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Israel, Kazakhstan, Peru.

3. ABOLITIONIST IN PRACTICE

Countries that retain the death penalty for ordinary crimes such as murder but can be considered abolitionist in practice in that they have not executed anyone during the last 10 years and are believed to have a policy or established practice of not carrying out executions:

Algeria, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Eswatini (former Swaziland), Ghana, Grenada, Kenya, Laos, Liberia, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco/Western Sahara, Myanmar, Niger, Papua New Guinea, Russian Federation,¹⁵⁴ Sierra Leone, South Korea (Republic of Korea), Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Tonga, Tunisia, Zambia.

4. RETENTIONIST

Countries that retain the death penalty for ordinary crimes:

Afghanistan, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Botswana, Chad, China, Comoros, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Nigeria, North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), Oman, Pakistan, Palestine (State of), Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, USA, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

¹⁵³ No executions were recorded in these countries in more than 10 years

¹⁵⁴ The Russian Federation introduced a moratorium on executions in August 1996. However, executions were carried out between 1996 and 1999 in the Chechen Republic.