

Death Penalty Focus

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P R E S S A D V I S O R Y

World Day Against the Death Penalty to be marked around the globe on October 10

The 7th annual World Day Against the Death Penalty will be celebrated internationally on Saturday, October 10, 2009. Every year since 2003, organizations committed to ending the death penalty have organized events around the world on this day. This year, across five continents, round tables, discussions, debates and exhibitions are planned. The program of scheduled events is on the website of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty [here](#).

Death Penalty Focus, a San Francisco-based non-profit organization that has been working for alternatives to the death penalty in the United States for over 20 years, joins the 98 other member organizations of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty to mark World Day. "The theme for this World Day is *Teaching Abolition*," said Elizabeth Zitrin, International Coordinator for Death Penalty Focus. "By encouraging debates on the death penalty, we hope that people – particularly students – will learn about the realities of this failed policy, which has been rejected by 139 nations around the world."

Progress toward universal abolition continues each year. In 2008, only 25 countries carried out executions and 93% of those occurred in just five countries: China, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United States. In 2009, the State of New Mexico joined the nations of Burundi and Togo in abolishing the death penalty. In addition, the nations of Kenya and Morocco commuted all of their death sentences earlier this year.

To mark World Day in California, Death Penalty Focus is working to generate 10,000 signatures on a petition to Governor Schwarzenegger to "convert all current death sentences to sentences of life without possibility of parole, protecting Californians while saving \$1 billion in five years" by November 10th. You can view the Petition on [Facebook](#) or [here](#).

In honor of the day, the European Union, which also celebrates the day as European Day Against the Death Penalty, is promoting the use of secondary and law school curricula to encourage discussion on the issue and develop critical thinking skills. They are available in seven languages on the World Coalition website at <http://www.worldcoalition.org>.

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