

**DEATH PENALTY**

*This is an update based on a recent meeting of the DFAT Death Penalty Consultative Group, which includes DFAT officers and NGO representatives (including QPLC).*

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is carrying forward the Australian Government's commitment to seeking the abolition of the death penalty worldwide. DFAT advocates in multilateral and bilateral fora including the UN Human Rights Council, briefings for bilateral meetings, and representations by Australian overseas posts to host countries. It also supports research and knowledge sharing, especially by the Capital Punishment Justice Project in Australia and the International Commission Against the Death Penalty in Madrid.

Countries where the death penalty is still a major issue are (a) Singapore, where 10 people have been executed this year (Australia's Foreign Minister met with the Foreign Minister and made clear Australia's concern); (b) Saudi Arabia, which maintains the death penalty despite seeking to position itself as a modern society; (c) Malaysia, which is moving to abolish the mandatory death penalty via legislation; (d) Papua New Guinea, which is committed to abolition; (e) Myanmar, where four executions took place recently (leading to protests from the Law Council of Australia and several NGOs); (f) China, where executions are common (Australia signed up to the torture-free initiative as one step to encourage a change); (g) Japan, where one execution took place recently (Australian NGOs are raising this with the Senate Standing Committee on Treaties to influence the Japan-Australia agreement).

The forthcoming United Nations General Assembly meetings will include a resolution calling for a moratorium, led by Costa Rica and Australia. Lobbying is seeking to increase the vote in favour from the 123 votes in 2020. There is some concern that moves to highlight 'sovereignty' and non-interference in domestic affairs could reduce support by ASEAN countries. There is an Anti-Death Penalty Asian Network (ADPAN) with 44 members in the Asia-Pacific region, and a World Coalition Against the Death Penalty. These work together in international meetings, and Australia's Mission to the UN in Geneva has hosted (with the World Coalition) a meeting of diplomats to focus on expanding the number of nations moving towards abolition. There is a World Day against the Death Penalty each year (10th October this year), and the theme this year is 'Death Penalty: A Road Paved with Torture'. There will also be a World Congress Against the Death Penalty in Berlin from 15 to 18 November.

The Australian agencies most engaged in advocacy and research work are – Amnesty International Australia, ANU College of Law, Australians Against Capital Punishment, Capital Punishment Justice Project, Eleos Justice (Monash), Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, Griffith Criminology Institute, and the Law Council of Australia.

Friends are invited to contribute ideas about how QPLC can build on the longstanding Quaker concern to abolish capital punishment.

Canberra

August 2022