



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Response to the UK Death Penalty Strategy

Thank you for contacting me about UK opposition to the death penalty.

The UK Government is opposed to the use of the death penalty under any circumstances as a matter of principle. It undermines human dignity, there is no evidence that it works as a deterrent and any miscarriage of justice in capital cases is irreversible and irreparable. This is a position Britain makes clear to all states that still use capital punishment.

The Foreign Office's work on the prevention of torture and the death penalty is central to our human rights work overseas. The Government's strategy for the abolition of the death penalty has focused on increasing the number of abolitionist countries (or countries with a moratorium on the use of the death penalty); securing further restrictions on its use; and when the death penalty is applied, aiming to ensure that universal minimum standards on its use are met. I would also stress that the Government uses all appropriate influence to prevent the execution of any British national and tailors its response to each individual case.

The UK uses targeted diplomacy and financial support for international non-governmental organisations, Parliamentarians and human rights lawyers in our efforts to persuade other governments to abolish the Death Penalty. In 2014, 22 countries executed people; while 140 countries were abolitionist in law or practice. I welcome the Government's efforts to see the long term trend towards abolition continue throughout this Parliament.

The UK works with law enforcement bodies across the world in a number of areas, including combatting the drugs trade. This work is governed by a robust framework which has respect for human rights as one of its fundamental principles. It also requires all overseas engagement to be kept under constant review.

A full list of countries of concern was published in March 2015 in the Foreign Office's Annual Human Rights Report. That list includes Saudi Arabia, highlighting its use of the death penalty.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Edward Timpson MP

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