



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply on the World Day Against the Death Penalty

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Tim Hanway
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 17, 2024

Neither international law nor OSCE commitments prohibit capital punishment. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes the authority of countries to impose the death penalty for the most serious crimes, carried out pursuant to a final judgment rendered by a competent court and in accordance with the laws of the country and all applicable legal protections, including fair trial guarantees. U.S. law and practice are consistent with these requirements.

The judicial system in the United States provides a system of protections at the state and federal levels intended to ensure that implementation of the death penalty is undertaken, after multiple layers of judicial review, in conformity with the U.S. Constitution and U.S. international obligations.

The use of capital punishment remains the subject of serious discussion and close examination in the United States, as evidenced by the fact that 23 States and the District of Columbia have abolished the death penalty, and three other States have a moratorium on it.

We reaffirm our longstanding opposition to the use of the death penalty after trials that do not respect fair trial guarantees, or for crimes that do not meet the “most serious crimes” threshold for capital punishment, as required under international law.

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