

WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY: PRESS RELEASE

The Independent Jamaican Council for Human Rights (IJCHR) and the local group of Amnesty International join with organizations, governments and individuals throughout the world in commemorating October 10th as World Day Against The Death Penalty.

In 2008, the Jamaican Parliament voted to retain the death penalty as the ultimate penalty for murder in Jamaica. Parliamentarians voted for retention predominantly in the belief that the fear of this punishment would act as a deterrent and reduce the occurrence of violent crimes in Jamaica.

With the greatest respect for the democratic mandate of parliamentarians, Amnesty International and the IJCHR believe that members of the House and the Senate should be held accountable for their decisions. Therefore, the citizens of Jamaica need to ask if retaining the death penalty is having the desired effect. Is the death penalty indeed a deterrent to violent crime?

As one MP stated during the debate “if we are hanging and the outcome is not what we anticipated or desired, what is next? We are not catching the criminals and that is the fundamental issue.”

We are taking this opportunity to call for a study of the effect the death penalty has had on all levels of violent crime. Between now, October 2009 and October 2010, the crime figures for Jamaica are to be analysed to see if the retention of the death penalty has indeed reduced the country’s violent crime rate. The results of this study should be announced on World Day Against the Death Penalty October, 2010.

In an effort to inform the public on the debate concerning the death penalty the IJCHR and Amnesty International in Jamaica has collaborated in putting out the “Human Rights Digest”, which is a free monthly newsletter committed to providing the general public with information from around the world on capital punishment and explaining why we are against the death penalty!

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