

Statement by the Spokesperson on the executions scheduled in Arkansas

Seven executions by lethal injection, scheduled by the US State of Arkansas for the period between 17 April and 27 April, would break the de-facto moratorium on the death penalty observed by this US State since November 2005. Arkansas would also become the first State in the US to conduct seven executions over an 11-day period since the resumption of the use of the death penalty in 1977 in the United States.

The European Union opposes capital punishment, which fails to act as a deterrent to crime, represents an unacceptable denial of human dignity and integrity and cannot be justified under any circumstances. More than 140 countries in the world are now abolitionist in law or practice.

Today, the death penalty is illegal in nineteen of the fifty US States and the District of Columbia. The number of executions in the US has steadily declined to its lowest level in 2016. The executions in Arkansas, if carried out as planned, would be a serious setback in this overall development.

We therefore call on the Governor of Arkansas to commute the sentences of Mr Bruce Earl Ward, Mr Don Williamson Davis, Mr Ledell Lee, Mr Stacey Eugene Johnson, Mr Jack Harold Jones, Mr Marcel W. Williams, Mr Kenneth D. Williams, as well as the sentence of Mr Jason F. McGehee, which has been temporarily stayed, and grant them relief from the death penalty.

Today's figures show the Government's abysmal record on living standards is getting even worse – Debbie Abrahams

Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary Debbie Abrahams, commenting on today's Labour Market Statistics, **said:**

"While we welcome the fall in unemployment, today's figures show the Government's abysmal record on living standards is getting even worse.

"Real wages are now stagnating under the Tories and working families are worse off as a result.

"The Government has also failed to close the employment gap faced by women, disabled people and ethnic minority groups, who are all less likely to be in work. Labour will stand up for all working people.

“We will introduce a Real Living Wage of £10 per hour and reverse cuts to in-work support that could see some families worse off by £2,600 a year.”

Ends

[Scientists to shed light on UK's underground energy technologies](#)

New £31m research facilities will see UK scientists gather critical data on the use of geenergy technologies to help meet energy needs.

[Press release: 4 anglers face combined fines of over £2,400 for fishing illegally in Gloucestershire](#)

On the 10 April, Cheltenham Magistrates' Court heard how 4 anglers were caught fishing without a rod licence by Environment Agency officers out on patrol last year. The offences were proved in absence and the 4 fishermen didn't appear in front of magistrates. Each face fines and fees totalling £611.47. And with an annual fishing licence now costing £30 these individuals are probably wishing they'd chosen the cheaper option.

Raymond Cole of Meadowleaze in Gloucester, Tomasz Mizera of The Bailey Lea in Coventry, Matthew Gooding of Garn Road in Nantyglo and Darren Edwards of Verwey Road in Nantyglo were all found guilty for fishing without a licence under Section 27(1)(a) of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.

Magistrates heard that Environment Agency enforcement officers found these anglers fishing without a rod licence at pools in Hartpury, and along the River Severn at Tewkesbury.

Stuart Gamble of the Environment Agency said:

The majority of anglers fish legally and purchase a rod licence. With anglers now being able to buy a licence online for a number of rods to cover any 12 month period it seems ridiculous the minority still risk a fine like these we've seen here.

The minority of anglers that fail to buy a rod licence are cheating their fellow anglers and the future of the sport. Fishing licence cheats risk a criminal conviction, a significant fine and could lose their fishing equipment.

Money from fishing licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers including protecting stocks from illegal fishing (including illegal elver patrols), pollution and disease; restoring fish stocks through re-stocking; eradicating invasive species; and fish habitat improvements. Rod licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

You need a valid Environment Agency rod licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England. Buying a rod licence is easy, simply visit www.gov.uk/fishing-licences/buy-a-fishing-licence

Anyone witnessing illegal fishing incidents in progress can report it directly to the Environment Agency hotline, 0800 80 70 60. Information on illegal fishing and environmental crime can also be reported anonymously to Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111.

[Republic of Moldova: Council agrees to €100 million financial assistance](#)

The Republic of Moldova's economy was affected by political instability during the period between elections in November 2014 and January 2016. It has also been affected by a banking fraud scandal, weak economic activity and import bans imposed by Russia. Since early 2016, the authorities have adopted a number of **reforms**, but need to undertake further efforts in implementing them, whilst those responsible for banking frauds need to be brought to justice. Reforms in the **financial sector** and in the management of **public finances** have been undertaken in the framework of negotiations on an IMF programme.

In July 2016 the Moldovan authorities and the IMF agreed a three-year extended credit facility and extended fund facility arrangement for \$178.7 million. The Republic of Moldova requested complementary assistance from the EU in August 2015 and renewed that request in March 2016.

The EU assistance would be subject to a **memorandum of understanding** (MOU), including precise and specific conditions, to be agreed by the Republic of Moldova with the Commission.

A precondition would be that the Republic of Moldova respects effective

democratic mechanisms, including a **multi-party parliamentary system**. It would have to respect the **rule of law** and guarantee respect for **human rights**. Objectives also include the efficiency, transparency and accountability of public finance management, an effective prevention of corruption and money laundering, and financial sector governance and supervision.

The Commission and the European External Action Service would regularly monitor the fulfilment of these preconditions and objectives.

The decision requires a qualified majority within the Council, in agreement with the Parliament. The legal basis is article 212 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.