

Statement by the Spokesperson on the execution of Mr Ledell Lee in the US State of Arkansas

The execution of Mr Ledell Lee yesterday has broken a *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty in the State of Arkansas, in place since 2005. Regardless of the circumstances, the death penalty can never be justified and remains an unacceptable denial of human rights and dignity. It also fails to act as a deterrent to crime.

Whilst reiterating that the European Union is strongly and unequivocally opposed to capital punishment, there are internationally-recognised minimum standards that States which insist on maintaining the death penalty must respect. This includes that where capital punishment occurs, it shall be carried out so as to inflict the minimum possible suffering.

We call on the authorities of the State of Arkansas to reinstate the moratorium on executions as a first step towards full abolition, thus following the positive example of the so far 19 US States who have abolished the death penalty.