

## EU calls for moratorium on executions

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Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty members protest outside the Ministry of Justice building in Taipei on Friday.

Photo: Chien Jung-fong, Taipei Times

The executions of six death-row inmates on Friday triggered a statement from the EU calling for an immediate moratorium on capital punishment in Taiwan, which in turn prompted heated debate among netizens.

The EU issued the statement hours after the executions on Friday night, which brought the number of prisoners executed by President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) administration to 32 since April 2010, when Ma ended a four-year moratorium on the death penalty.

The EU called on Taiwan to "introduce an immediate moratorium on executions" as recommended by international experts in March 2013 following Taiwan's first human rights report and as had been the case in Taiwan from 2006 to April 2010, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini said.

"We recognize the suffering of the victims of the crimes involved and express our sincere sympathy to their families," she said.

"However, the EU reiterates that the death penalty can never be justified and calls for its universal abolition," Mogherini said.

The human rights report was a review conducted by 10 international experts in 2013 on

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Taiwan's compliance with two UN human rights covenants that the nation signed in 2009.

Executions in April 2010, March 2011, December 2012, April 2013 and April last year also drew calls from the EU for an end to capital punishment.

The European Economic and Trade Office, the EU's representative office in Taiwan, posted Mogherini's statement on Facebook, prompting messages from netizens critical of the EU's "interference in the nation's internal affairs."

"While I respect your opinions, I do not think the EU is in any position to interfere in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state," Ellen Tsai wrote.

Liao Jen-te said the EU should pull its forces from operations against the Islamic State group if it thinks that killing is wrong and cannot be justified under any circumstances even if the person to be executed is a murderer.

Some netizens welcomed the EU's statement.

Liu Che-wei said he hopes the EU will continue to press the government to accept a moratorium as an interim measure before Taiwan can move toward abolishing the death penalty.

"Refraining from interfering in the nation's affairs is what China says to other countries when it threatens to attack Taiwan," Lin Yun-mu said.

Miffie Chen said: "Am I in China?"

The European office made another post, saying that the EU is not interfering in anybody's

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internal affairs.

“The EU is not lecturing anyone, not putting pressure on anybody, and even less giving orders or instructions,” it said.

“The EU is itself far from perfect from the point of view of human rights, but the very principle at the basis of human rights is that these are universal values which should be enjoyed by all members of humankind,” the office said.

The office said that the EU speaks out on human rights issues and is ready to conduct dialogue and cooperation because it cares.

In the same spirit as the office in 2013 presented a series of questions and answers regarding its position against the death penalty, the office continues to welcome any questions and would try hard to answer, because communication provides momentum for making progress, it said.

Amnesty International also issued a statement condemning the executions on Friday.

“The public outrage at the horrific murder of an innocent schoolgirl is totally understandable and the perpetrators of such heinous crimes must face justice, but the death penalty is never the answer,” Amnesty International researcher William Nee said in a statement.

“The decision to carry out the executions reeks of political calculations by a government attempting to gain points by quelling public anger,” Nee said.

“The government has today demonstrated a failure of political leadership,” he added.

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“The executions fly in the face of the government’s stated long-term goal to abolish the death penalty. The government must cease using executions as a political tool and should establish an official moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition,” he said.

Additional reporting by Loa lok-sin

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