# UN Third Committee approves death penalty moratorium 133-33-16, India votes against

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**16 November 2026:** The UN General Assembly's **Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural)** on 13 November approved the draft resolution **"Moratorium on the use of the death penalty"** (document A/C.3/81/L.43) by a recorded vote of **133 in favour, 33 against, 16 abstentions**. **India voted against**. Note the stage: this is a **committee approval** - the text now goes to the General Assembly **plenary** for final adoption.

## Key elements of the resolution

- **Introduced by:** Mexico, on behalf of the Inter-Regional Task Force on the Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty; the argument - "no system is immune to error" and a moratorium prevents irreversible miscarriages of justice.
- **Singapore's sovereignty amendment (A/C.3/81/L.50):** passed **97-63-16**, reaffirming every country's sovereign right to develop its own legal system and penalties. Mexico regretted it.
- **Worrying trend:** reported executions rose by almost **80%** compared with 2024, concentrated in a small number of States.
- **Example cited:** Lebanon formally abolished capital punishment in August 2026 after a 22-year moratorium - "a moratorium can serve as an effective first step toward

abolition".

### The other nine drafts approved in the same meeting

- **Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (L.37/Rev.1):** approved 131-0-47; Egypt's amendment to remove "sexual orientation or gender identity" references rejected 69-74-24; Russia's two ICC/Rome Statute amendments rejected 22-81.
- **Use of mercenaries:** Cuba's draft approved 117-54-7, amid heated Cuba-US exchanges.
- **International cooperation in human rights:** 176-3-3 (against: Argentina, Israel, United States).
- **Unilateral coercive measures, right to development, peace, democratic international order, right to food** - approved with varying margins.

### India and the death penalty: exam context

- **India's framework:** the "rarest of rare" doctrine - **Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab (1980)**; India has consistently voted against this resolution (The Hindu reports it did so again, among the 33).
- **Third Committee:** one of the UNGA's six main committees, dealing with social, humanitarian and cultural issues; drafts approved here go to the plenary.
- **Law Commission's 262nd Report (2015):** recommended abolishing the death penalty for all crimes except terrorism-related offences.
- **ICCPR:** does not prohibit capital punishment but restricts it to the most serious crimes - the provision Singapore cited.

### Quiz: Test your knowledge

▶ Q1: Consider: 1. The moratorium draft was approved 133-33-16 2. It has already been finally adopted by the General Assembly plenary 3. Mexico introduced it on behalf of an inter-regional task force. Which are correct?

▶ Q2: Which judgment limited the death penalty in India to the "rarest of rare" cases?

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

**In short:** The UNGA Third Committee approved the death-penalty moratorium draft 133-33-16 on 13 November 2026; India voted against; the draft now goes to the plenary; Singapore's sovereignty amendment also passed.

## Question: By what margin did the Third Committee approve the death-penalty moratorium draft?

133 in favour, 33 against, 16 abstentions. India voted against. This is committee-stage approval; final adoption happens in the General Assembly plenary.

## Question: Why does India vote against the moratorium?

India argues the death penalty is awarded only in the "rarest of rare" cases with full judicial process and safeguards, and that criminal-justice policy is a sovereign matter - the same reasoning behind Singapore's amendment.

## Question: What else was notable in the meeting?

The extrajudicial executions draft passed 131-0-47 (Egypt's and Russia's amendments rejected), Cuba's mercenaries draft passed 117-54-7, and the human-rights cooperation draft passed 176-3-3 - ten drafts in all.

## Sources:


- https://press.un.org/en/2026/gashc4458.doc.htm (official: UN meetings coverage, 13 November 2026)
- https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-votes-against-unga-resolution-calling-for-global-moratorium-on-death-penalty/article71704094.ece (news report - source for India's vote, which the UN release does not list)