



Peace and Justice Commission

ACTION CALENDAR  
November 15, 2005

To: Honorable Mayor and  
Members of the City Council

From: Peace and Justice Commission

Submitted by: Steve Freedkin, Chair, Peace and Justice Commission

Subject: Cities Against the Death Penalty

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council vote to join 'Cities Against the Death Penalty'; to decorate a monument, building, or other site to be determined by the City Manager's Office and the Mayor's Office to symbolize its support, from November 28 to November 30, 2005; to designate the Peace and Justice Commission as the 'reference' for the initiatives of the World Campaign as indicated in the bullet points from 'Cities Against the Death Penalty'; and to pursue any other points on that bullet list it considers appropriate.

#### BACKGROUND

The death penalty is the ultimate, irreversible denial of human rights. Since 1977, more than 900 people have been executed in the United States, and there are currently around 3,500 men and women on death row across the country. Grassroots activists throughout the country have played an essential role in advocating against this human-rights violation through monitoring cases, mobilizing around executions and other events, and lobbying for anti-death penalty legislation.

Cities participating in the world campaign against the death penalty are encouraged to light and decorate a selected monument, building or alternate place that symbolically represents the city, from the 28<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of November. Cities are also encouraged to light the chosen landmark on other occasions that are meaningful to the defense of life.

At its regular meeting on September 12, 2005, the Peace and Justice Commission discussed the issue of the death penalty. After discussion of the item, the Commission passed the following motion:

**M/S/C** (*Freedkin, Brody*) that the Peace and Justice Commission recommends that the City Council vote to join 'Cities Against the Death Penalty'; to decorate a monument, building, or

other site to symbolize its support from November 28 to November 30, 2005 to be determined by the City Manager's Office and the Mayor's Office; designate the Peace and Justice Commission as the 'reference' for the initiatives of the World Campaign as indicated in the bullet points from 'Cities Against the Death Penalty'; and pursue any other points on that bullet list it considers appropriate. **Ayes:** Beltran, Bohn, Brody, Cohen, Freedkin, Kashner, Litman, McDonald, Seaton, Sorgen, Wagley, Weddle, Winkelman; **Noes:** Wornick; **Abstain:** Sherman; **Absent:** None.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of this measure would be the costs of any actions the City Manager and the Mayor decide to take pursuant to this resolution.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the content and recommendations of the Commission's Report.

CONTACT PERSON

Manuel Hector, Commission Secretary, 981-5110

Attachments:

- 1: Letter to Mayor Bates from the Community of Sant'Egidio
- 2: "Cities for Life – Cities against the death penalty"

# ATTACHMENT I

## COMUNITÀ DI SANTEGIDIO

Roma, 2.6.2005

Prot. 735/05

Honorable Mr. Mayor,

In almost every part of the world, the positive motion toward the abolition of the death penalty has continued steadily, further confirming a 30 year trend that has seen many countries abolish the death penalty - like in Senegal recently - or suspend capital executions. The recent decision of the United States Supreme Court declaring the imposition of the death penalty on minors unconstitutional has to be emphasized. Also worthy of note is the recent Chinese decision to remove the ability to impose a capital sentence from local courts, a decision that should diminish the number of executions in China.

In the sphere of international relations, the abolition of capital punishment is considered one of the defining characteristics of an elevated and committed understanding of democracy. As it was for torture or slavery, once commonly accepted but later abolished, so it will be for death penalty. The number of countries maintaining the death penalty is decreasing gradually, and the number of executions -- in both relative and real terms -- has diminished considerably over the past few years. In many places of the world, as well as within the consciences of a multitude of people, the death penalty is increasingly seen as an irreparable violation of the sacredness of human life and human dignity that impoverishes the very institutions and societies that use capital punishment without giving them any added security. Thanks to the commitment of a widespread movement against the death penalty, this awareness, is growing in many parts of the world even though a number of countries continue to retain the death penalty.

The *World Coalition Against the Death Penalty* was born in May 2002, in Rome, at the headquarters of the Community of Sant'Egidio. The coalition includes: The Community of Sant'Egidio, Amnesty International, Ensemble contre la Peine de Mort, International Penal Reform and FIACAT. As part of the initiative, Sant'Egidio launched the First World Day of Cities Against the Death Penalty, which was observed 30 November 2002. This date has become an international appointment and marks the anniversary of the first abolition of the death penalty on the part of a state: that of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany on 30 November 1786. Fifty years later, on 1 March 1831, the State of Michigan made the same decision. The decision was contagious and the Republic of Venice and Russia under Catherine the Great soon followed suit.

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Mr. Tom Bates  
Mayor City of BERKELEY  
2180 Milvia Street  
CA 94704 Berkeley - USA

PIAZZA DI S. EGIDIO, 3/A - 00153 ROMA

TEL. +39.06.5850001 - FAX +39.06.5800107 - WWW.SANTEGIDIO.ORG - E-MAIL: info@santegidio.org - CCM. P.I.S.C. 06003790789

More than 80 cities -- from Santiago, Chile, to Stockholm, to Canberra, Australia -- participated in the first edition of the World Day of Cities against the Death Penalty by specially and spectacularly lighting a monument, building or area symbolic of their city and with educational initiatives aimed at educating the public. In Rome, the special lighting decorated the Coliseum; in Brussels the Atomium; in Barcelona, the cathedral square; in Santiago, the Moneda Palace; and in Buenos Aires, the Casa Rosada.

The initiative was a great success, and an increasing number of cities have joined in. The third World Day, in 2004, saw the participation of almost 300 cities, including 16 national capitals.

Some of the cities involved also have made a commitment to "adopt" a death row inmate, offering economic support to the International Fund for the Legal Defense of Those Condemned to Death, established by the Community of Sant'Egidio.

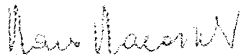
Planning for the fourth annual observance of the World Day of Cities Against the Death Penalty, 30 November 2005, is underway and already shows evidence of becoming a true worldwide event.

Cities can join the initiative by contacting the coordinating committee before 20 November 2005.

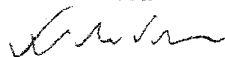
We invite your city and your citizens to contribute to this struggle for civility, joining the "Cities for Life -- Cities Against the Death Penalty" campaign. Attached you will find information on participating in this initiative. If at all possible, we would ask that you kindly send us a quick note letting us know that you received this letter. And we would be very appreciative if you cared to inform us of other cities you believe would be interested in joining the initiative.

Welcoming this opportunity, we offer you our greatest respect.

Comunità di  
SANT'EGIDIO



Comune di  
ROMA



**Contact person:**

**Alberto Quattrucci - a.quattrucci@tiscalinet.it**

Community of Sant'Egidio - Piazza di S. Egidio 3/A - 00153 Roma

[www.santegidio.org](http://www.santegidio.org) e-mail: [com@santegidio.org](mailto:com@santegidio.org)

Tel+39 06 585661 - Fax 39 06 5883625

## ATTACHMENT 2

### Community of Sant'Egidio

#### "Cities for Life - Cities against death penalty"

How to join the world campaign: commitments and initiatives

- Each participating city lights and decorates a selected monument, building or alternate place that symbolically represents the city, from the 28<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, 2005. The city may also choose to light the chosen landmark on other occasions that are meaningful to the defence of life (e.g. a state declaring the abolition of death penalty, providing a moratorium on executions or commuting death sentences ...).
- Each city has the authority to declare November the 30<sup>th</sup> the "Day for Life / against death penalty", and, place under the name of its city or under its symbol and in its web-site the sentence "City member of 'Cities for Life / Cities against Death penalty'" if it should choose to do so.
- Each city appoints a person, or an office, to become a reference for the initiatives of the World Campaign, and to its sponsor, the Community of Sant'Egidio, and assents, with a resolution by the City Council and the individual subscription by the administrators and the elected representatives to the Appeal for a World Moratorium (attached).
- Each city may link the homepage of its web-site, through a link with the web-site of the Community of Sant'Egidio - [www.santegidio.org](http://www.santegidio.org) - which links directly to the page that explains the World Campaign against the Death Penalty, [www.santegidio.org/pdm/logo\\_cities.htm](http://www.santegidio.org/pdm/logo_cities.htm), where a full list of cities joining the campaign may be found.
- Each city may invite its citizens to sign the Appeal for a "universal moratorium" which has already collected over 5 and half million signatures in the world, through campaigns of communication and choosing some places, like public buildings and museums, where copies of the appeal can be signed.
- Each city is encouraged to promote cultural and other initiatives to awaken public opinion (which can be supported and organised in synergy with the Community of Sant'Egidio and associations linked to it, in Italy and in other countries) with the purpose of celebrating the International day of November the 30<sup>th</sup>, or other meaningful dates for the defence of human rights in the world. The modes of celebration may change from time to time.
- Each city is invited to "adopt" - in a way to be agreed with the promoters - an inmate sentenced to death.

Almost three hundred cities have adhered to the initiative with various events among which are lighting of a monument, promotion of workshops and seminars, and marches and rallies in public squares. Several have also chosen to participate in an International fund for the legal defence of people sentenced to death, already created by the Community of Sant'Egidio. The city may choose to invite its citizens to contribute to the International Fund, through the campaign "One dollar for Life", setting gathering points for the offering in city museums and public offices (initiatives can be studied on the purpose, like special tickets for visiting monuments which already include the offer, et al.)

- Contact:

**Alberto Quattrucci** - [a.quattrucci@tiscali.it](mailto:a.quattrucci@tiscali.it)  
Comunità di Sant'Egidio  
Piazza di S.Egidio 3/A - 00153 Roma - Italia  
[www.santegidio.org](http://www.santegidio.org)  
e-mail: [com@santegidio.org](mailto:com@santegidio.org)  
Tel +39.06.585661 - Fax +39.06.5883625

**Paola Piscitelli**  
Community of Sant'Egidio, USA  
560 Riverside Drive #13F  
New York, New York 10027  
e-mail : [paola.piscitelli@verizon.net](mailto:paola.piscitelli@verizon.net)  
Tel 212 663-1483 - Fax 212 663-4178