

Human Rights Watch

Children's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/05/19/us-young-are-different-justices-rule>

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Letter to the Editor on Supreme Court Decision Regarding the Sentence of Juvenile Life Without Parole

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Re "[Justices Limit Life Sentences for Juveniles](#)" (front page, May 18):

To the Editor:

The Supreme Court decision on Monday to prohibit sentences of life without parole for juvenile offenders who did not commit homicide is a welcome recognition of children's capacity for rehabilitation, even after committing horrible crimes.

Unfortunately, however, the United States does not now stand in "unanimous agreement" with the rest of the world, as your editorial suggests, regarding the sentencing of youth offenders to life without parole. No other country imposes juvenile life without parole for any crime, including homicide. The United States remains an egregious outlier.

Our research indicates that there are well over a thousand youth offenders who will spend the rest of their lives in prison for committing homicide in the United States.

The court's analysis points the way forward: it explains that youth are categorically "less culpable" than adults, and it requires states to give youth "meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation."

Bills are pending around the country to do precisely that. Until they pass and all juvenile offenders receive opportunities for parole, the United States will remain out of step with the rest of the world.

Alison Parker
Director, U.S. Program
Human Rights Watch
San Francisco, May 18, 2010

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Children and Families Sent to Harm by the US Remain in Mexico Program

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