



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

President

Federico Mayor

Members

Giuliano Amato

Louise Arbour

Robert Badinter

Mohammed Bedjaoui

Ruth Dreifuss

Michèle Duvivier
Pierre-Louis

Hanne Sophie Greve

Asma Jilani Jahangir

Ioanna Kuçuradi

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

Navanethem (Navi) Pillay

Ibrahim Najjar

Bill Richardson

Horacio Verbitsky

Honorary Member

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(1939-2014)

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Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Eight executions planned to be carried out by Arkansas authorities

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) is deeply concerned about recent news reports suggesting that in Arkansas, Governor Asa Hutchinson signed orders on 27 February 2017 for eight executions to be carried out by lethal injection over a period of 10 days in April. The Commission strongly condemns this unprecedented decision that not only breaks the long-term moratorium on capital punishment, since 2005, which has underlined the state of Arkansas' respect for life but also erodes human dignity as the decision appears to be predicated on the expiry of date of one of the key drugs used for carrying out executions. According to reports reaching ICDP, the eight executions have been scheduled to be carried out within a very short span of time because the state's supply of the drug Midazolam will expire in April.

"The Commission and I are very concerned because this decision by Governor Hutchinson could result in Arkansas having the horrific distinction of being the first state in the United States to carry out so many executions in such a short period of time: eight executions in ten days; no other state has carried out as many as eight executions in a single month since executions resumed in United States in 1977," said ICDP President Federico Mayor.

According to reports reaching ICDP, eight men face imminent executions, which is scheduled to be carried out two executions a day in four dates between 17 and 27 April. The executions of Bruce Ward and Don Davis are expected to be carried out on 17 April, Stacey Johnson and Ledell Lee on 20 April, Jack Jones and Marcel Williams on 24 April and Kenneth Williams and Jason McGehee on 27 April. These eight men are among 34 persons facing the death penalty in Arkansas.

"ICDP and I call on Governor Hutchinson to reconsider his decision to reinstate the death penalty in the state of Arkansas as by doing so, he will be leaving a legacy of violating the fundamental human right, the right to life, as also not respecting the right to human dignity. Logistical challenges in finding drugs for lethal injections cannot be used to justify carrying out executions, and that too, in such a short space of time. The ever present risk of human error carries the danger that an innocent person could be executed. We call on the authorities in Arkansas to establish an official moratorium on the use of the death penalty while steps are taken to move away from the use of capital punishment in the country", said President Federico Mayor.



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The United States (the US) is the only country in the Americas to carry out executions. ICDP calls on Arkansas to join the 18 states in the US and 104 countries around the world that have recognized that modern justice systems can protect the public from crime without the irrevocable and cruel nature of the death penalty and the constant risk of executing an innocent person. They have recognized that state killing is wrong and fails to deter crime more effectively than other punishments.

Federico Mayor
President
of the International Commission
against the Death Penalty

Background

Composed of 17 Commissioners, who are persons of high international standing from all regions of the world, ICDP acts with total independence and neutrality and works under its President Mr. Federico Mayor.

ICDP opposes the death penalty under any circumstances believing that it violates the right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Commission promotes the abolition of capital punishment in law in those States that observe a de facto moratorium on the use of the death penalty and promotes moratoriums on executions in states that rarely use the death penalty.

ICDP works with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, governments and nongovernmental organizations to further the abolition of capital punishment worldwide.

The work of ICDP is supported by a diverse group of 18 States from all regions of the world that are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Its secretariat is based in Madrid.