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Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Washington State Governor declares moratorium on executions

**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

Rodolfo Mattarollo

Ibrahim Najjar

Bill Richardson

Honorary Member

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero

Secretariat

Rue Rothschild 20, TL 004
CH-1202 Geneva
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 908 44 22
Fax: +41 22 908 62 62
asunta.vivo@icomdp.org
info@icomdp.org

www.icomdp.org

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) warmly welcomes the suspension of executions in Washington State, USA (US), announced by Governor Jay Inslee yesterday.

“This is significant progress and we congratulate Governor Inslee for his leadership in the decision to declare a moratorium of capital punishment in Washington State. It is another sign that the death penalty is steadily retreating in the US as more states bring their justice systems into the modern era,” said Federico Mayor, President of ICDP.

At a news conference on 11 February, Governor Inslee said the moratorium would last for as long as he is in office. Following months of review including meetings with victims’ families, law enforcement experts and prosecutors, he concluded that there are “too many doubts” about capital punishment.

According to the Governor, the capital punishment system “does not deter crime, costs citizens millions of dollars more than life in prison without parole,” is “unequally applied” and “exposes families to multiple decades of uncertainty.”

Governor Inslee told reporters that he hopes the moratorium will allow Washington State to “join a growing national conversation about capital punishment,” and that he would support decision by lawmakers for a permanent ban on the death penalty.

The decision to suspend capital punishment means that the Governor will issue a reprieve on any death penalty case that comes to his desk. Death row inmates will remain in prison rather than be executed, but will not be pardoned or have their sentences commuted.

“We hope that a further study of the death penalty by citizens and political leaders in Washington will lead to commutations and total abolition,” said Federico Mayor, President of ICDP.

Governor Inslee said that in the 33 years since Washington State enacted its capital punishment laws, 60% of 32 people sentenced to death have had their sentences overturned. “When the majority of death penalty sentences lead to reversal, the entire system must be called into question,” he said.

In Washington, eight men are currently on death row and no executions have been carried out for more than three years.

The moratorium makes Washington the latest in a series of states to move away from capital punishment. So far 18 US states have abolished capital punishment and others are moving in that direction. Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico and New York have become abolitionist in recent years, with Maryland joining this group in 2013.



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Colorado, Delaware, Oregon and New Hampshire are moving towards abolition. Last year, Governor John W. Hickenlooper of Colorado issued an indefinite reprieve in the only death penalty case during his tenure. In 2011, Governor John Kitzhaber of Oregon announced a moratorium on executions.

Across the US, execution and death sentence numbers are declining, and public support for capital punishment is dwindling.

According to the United Nations, some 150 countries from all regions have abolished the death penalty or do not execute – having recognized that modern justice systems can protect the public from crime without the death penalty's cruelty, ineffectiveness as a crime deterrent and constant risk of executing an innocent person.

Federico Mayor
President of the International Commission
against the Death Penalty

Background

ICDP was founded in Madrid in October 2010. ICDP is composed of 15 persons of high international standing from all regions of the world who act with total independence and neutrality and work 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. ICDP 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. In states that continue to carry out executions ICDP urges strict adherence to international standards.

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