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**International Commission
against the Death Penalty**

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Founding Members

Rodolfo Mattarollo,
(1939-2014)

Asma Jilani Jahangir
(1952-2018)

Secretariat

Serrano Galvache 26,
Torre Sur, 10 planta,
Despacho 10-78, 28071 Madrid,
Spain

Tel: +00 34 91 3799458

asunta.vivo@icomdp.org

info@icomdp.org

www.icomdp.org

Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Governor Newsom's order declaring moratorium on death penalty in California is a very welcome step moving away from the death penalty

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) warmly welcomes the Executive Order N-09-19 issued on 13 March 2019 by the Governor of US state of California Gavin Newsom which orders "(a)n executive moratorium on the death penalty" that "has been instituted in the form of a reprieve for all people sentenced to death in California."

"I believe that the signing of the Executive Order instituting a moratorium on the death penalty in California by Governor Gavin Newsom is an important, long sought-after and courageous decision with significant implications as it affects the 737 people currently under sentence of death. This Order means that during the term of Governor Newsom one in four people facing the death penalty in the United States, who are in California, will not be subjected to this cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The order will also include the closure of the Death Chamber at San Quentin prison and the repeal of the lethal injection protocol in California. By suspending the executions, ICDP is pleased to note that California joins the growing number of states in the United States that support the respect for the fundamental right to life and, thereby, human dignity," said ICDP President Judge Navi Pillay.

ICDP notes Governor Newsom's promise that "(t)he intentional killing of another person is wrong and as Governor, I will not oversee the execution of any individual." We appreciate his candid admission that the "death penalty system has been, by all measures, a failure", that "death sentences are unevenly and unfairly applied to people of color, people with mental disabilities, and people who cannot afford costly legal representation." We share Governor Newsom's concern in his statement that more than six in ten people under sentence of death in California are people of color and that, "(a)t least 18 of the 25 people executed in the U.S. in 2018 had one or more of the following impairments: significant evidence of mental illness; evidence of brain injury, developmental brain damage, or an IQ in the intellectually disabled range; chronic serious childhood trauma, neglect, and/or abuse." ICDP Commissioners fully agree his conclusion that the death penalty "has provided no public safety benefit or value as a deterrent. It has wasted billions of taxpayer dollars" and that it is "irreversible and irreparable in the event of human error." In this context, we applaud Governor Newsom highlighting that "since 1973, 164 condemned prisoners nationwide, including five in California, have been freed from death row after they were found to have been wrongfully convicted." ICDP Commissioners have highlighted our concerns at the risk of wrongful conviction not just in the USA but also worldwide

"I note with great appreciation the powerful arguments made by Governor Newsom underlining his belief that the death penalty in California is unfair, unjust, wasteful and that the death penalty system has failed, and so we call on



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him to follow up on this historic announcement and take further steps that will ensure that his state moves away from the death penalty and joins the growing number of US states that have abolished the death penalty," said ICDP President Judge Navi Pillay.

ICDP believes that the death penalty violates the fundamental right to life proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and should not be applied in any circumstances, regardless of the gravity of the crime.

Judge Navi Pillay
President of International Commission
against the Death Penalty

Background

Composed of 22 Commissioners, who are persons of high international standing and who represent all regions of the world, ICDP acts with total independence and neutrality and works under its President Judge Navi Pillay.

ICDP opposes the death penalty under any circumstances. The death penalty violates the right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose 70th anniversary is being observed this year. 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 punishments worldwide.

The work of ICDP is supported by a diverse group of 22 Member-States including two Observer States from all parts of the world who are committed to the abolition of the death.