



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

President
Federico Mayor

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Louise Arbour

Robert Badinter

Mohammed Bedjaoui

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Hanne Sophie Greve

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Geneva, 21 October 2014

Open Letter by the International Commission against the Death Penalty to President of Afghanistan, Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai

Your Excellency,

We write to you as Commissioners of the International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) to express our deep concern at the reported executions of six men carried out by authorities in Afghanistan on Wednesday, 8 October 2014. We are particularly concerned as this is one of your first acts after assuming the office of President of Afghanistan.

From reports we received, it appears that five men were executed by hanging in Pul-e-Charkhi prison after being convicted of armed robbery and gang rape of four women near the town of Paghman, outside Kabul. The sixth person, a man who was also known as Habib Istalif, was executed, also by hanging, after being reportedly charged for crimes including kidnapping and multiple murders.

Opposing the death penalty does not amount to condoning the crime; it is to stand up for the rule of law and human rights. It is essential that victims of crime receive justice rooted in human rights and due process, not revenge and retribution.

We are further concerned to note that these executions were carried out despite concerns raised by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights who received credible allegations that five men were ill-treated while in pre-trial detention and were denied adequate legal representation including during the legal proceedings. These concerns, we believe, led to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hassan, writing to you in September expressing "great concerns that the legal process that led to these convictions (of the five men) failed to comply with national and international fair trial standards" and "requesting a judicial review and reconsideration of these cases to ensure that the right to fair trial of the accused individuals was upheld."

Your Excellency, we would like to draw your attention to the global trend where most States no longer use the death penalty. According to the United Nations, some 160 countries from all world regions and cultures have abolished capital punishment or no longer execute. These nations have recognized that State killing is wrong and fails to deter crime more effectively than other punishments. In addition, the death penalty exacerbates the consequences of judicial errors, present even in the most advanced judicial systems, with the constant risk of executing an innocent person.



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We call on your Government to immediately stop executions and to establish a moratorium on executions in line with the UN General Assembly Resolutions calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty which were adopted in 2007, 2008, 2010 and 2012.

Please accept the assurances of our highest consideration.

Federico Mayor

President of the International Commission against the Death Penalty

Louise Arbour, Asma Jahangir and Bill Richardson

Commissioners of the International Commission against the Death Penalty