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**International Commission
against the Death Penalty**

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Rodolfo Mattarollo,
(1939-2014)

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**Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty:
Launch of ICDP Publication, *How States Abolish the Death Penalty: 29
Case-Studies***

It is with great pleasure that the International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) announces the launch of its publication, *How States Abolish the Death Penalty: 29 Case-Studies*. This publication briefly describes the experiences of 26 countries and 3 USA states as they moved towards abolition of the death penalty. These Case Studies are drawn from 27 countries from all regions of the world. This publication is an updated and enlarged version of ICDP's 2013 publication *How States Abolish the Death Penalty*.

"In my experience as a South African lawyer, as a judge, President at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, as a judge at the International Criminal Court and as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, I have found that the death penalty is not the answer. Violence cannot be resolved by more violence. The respect and protection of the fundamental right to life is more important than any form of revenge. The death penalty is discriminatory, often resulting from forced confessions and carries the risk of an innocent person. It undermines human dignity and does not deter serious crime. The move away from the death penalty requires political will and political leadership and this is underlined in this document which draws on the lessons and experiences of its 29 Case-Studies," said ICDP President Judge Navi Pillay.

The Case Studies highlighted in the publication finds that:

- political leadership could come from Heads of State or Government, the National Assembly, judges including those from the Constitutional Court, national opposition.
- abolition in some States is often associated with marking a break with a repressive past or at the end of a war and a ceasefire or at the end of periods of martial law.
- the adoption by leaders of the route of their countries making an international commitment to abolish the death penalty as an initial step, for instance by countries initially becoming State Parties to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- the very important role played by human rights civil society organizations, religious organizations, professional organizations in



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creating awareness among the political leadership, among key stakeholders and shaping the narrative towards abolition.

- international pressure has also played an important role including the Universal Periodic Review, resolutions and recommendations by UN human rights bodies.

- regional human rights standards have marked influence on abolition such as the American Convention on Human Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights.

“I believe that this work is essential to promote the abolition of capital punishment in all regions of the world. This paper is intended to facilitate and contribute to the ultimate goal – a death penalty-free world,” said ICDP President Navi Pillay.

Judge Navi Pillay
President
International Commission
against Death Penalty

Background

Composed of 21 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 19 Member-States and 3 Observer States from all parts of the world that are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Its secretariat is based in Madrid.