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Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Use of the death penalty in the USA continues to decline.

**International Commission
against the Death Penalty**

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The number of death sentences in the USA continues to decline. According to a December report issued by the Washington-based Death Penalty Information Center, seventy-seven people were sentenced to death in 2012, the second lowest total since capital punishment was reinstated in 1976.

The number of executions in 2012 was 43, the same as in 2011. Nine states carried out executions but 75% of executions were in just four states: Arizona Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas.

Texas, with 15 executions, remains the state with the most executions. One-third of all executions are in Texas, although new death sentences in the state are at a historic low.

Some traditional death penalty states, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, had no death sentences nor executions in 2012.

Public opinion polls indicate a slight majority now favor life imprisonment over the death penalty.

“The challenge is to deliver a criminal justice system that is effective at punishing the guilty and reforming their behavior: a justice system that protects the public from crime but without the barbarity and cruelty of the death penalty, and one that does not risk executing the innocent,” said Mr. Federico Mayor, President of the International Commission against the Death Penalty.

Connecticut became the fifth state in five years to abolish the death penalty. The other four states that ended the death penalty recently are Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, and New York.

“This report is welcome news. According to the United Nations more than 150 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or do not execute. I hope that before too long the US will join the community of states that have abolished the death penalty,” said Mr. Federico Mayor.

Voters in California narrowly chose to retain the death penalty and other states such as Maryland, Colorado, and New Hampshire also appear to be moving closer to abolition.

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BACKGROUND

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) was founded in Madrid in October 2010. ICDP is composed of 14 personalities 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 16 states from all regions of the world that are committed to abolition of the death penalty. There is small secretariat in Geneva.