



Press Release

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MADRID: ANTI-DEATH PENALTY TREND WELCOMED BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN

(Madrid) As human rights activists worldwide mark World Day against the Death Penalty tomorrow (10 October), the International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) organized a meeting of leading experts in Madrid who welcomed progress towards the global abolition of capital punishment – but warned of serious challenges still remaining.

ICDP, an independent body of eminent individuals of international standing – said that a shrinking group of executing States around the world was becoming more isolated.

“Our meeting was an opportunity to put the spotlight on capital punishment – the ultimate denial of human rights and a cruel practice that does huge harm to societies,” said Federico Mayor, President of the International Commission against the Death Penalty.

A small group of countries continue to execute their citizens. China, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, USA and Yemen are consistently among the highest executioners year-on-year.

At its sixth international meeting, held in Madrid on 8 and 9 October, the Commission said that despite some setbacks like the recent 9 executions in The Gambia, and a worrying increase in Iran Iraq – the trend against the death penalty is gathering strength.

According to the UN over two-thirds of all States – more than 150 countries from all regions and cultures – have now rejected capital punishment because of its inherent cruelty, its ineffectiveness at deterring crime and the ever-present risk of executing the innocent.

“Next month, that spotlight will shift to California in the USA, where on 6 November voters will have an opportunity to repeal the state’s death penalty laws. A positive vote against capital punishment could have far-reaching consequences – potentially encouraging other US states and countries such as Japan to agree that state killing has no place in a modern justice system.”

In December the UN General Assembly will again call on the minority of death penalty countries to implement a moratorium on executions as step towards abolishing capital punishment.

The Commission marked the 10 October World Day with two other events in Madrid. The first was a roundtable at which international experts reviewed global developments, identifying legal and political challenges and opportunities for the next five years.

The second event was a public meeting held today, at which participants discussed the death penalty and strategies to urge all governments to join the worldwide trend towards abolition.

“There remain serious challenges on the road to a world free from the death penalty – but those states yet to reject executions are becoming increasingly isolated. We urge them to immediately suspend executions as a first step towards total abolition,” said Mr. Federico Mayor.

Founded by the Spanish government in 2010 ICDP is supported by a group of 16 governments from all world regions. It opposes the death penalty in all situations.

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