



International Commission  
against the Death Penalty

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**Founding Members**

Rodolfo Mattarollo,  
(1939-2014)

Asma Jilani Jahangir  
(1952-2018)

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**Statement: The International Commission Against the Death Penalty  
mourns the sudden demise of eminent human rights scholar and  
practitioner Professor Christof Heyns**

It is with great sadness that the International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) mourns the sudden demise of the eminent human rights lawyer, scholar, human rights defender, practitioner and our friend Professor Christof Heyns.

Professor Heyns had worked closely with ICDP in his role as United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from 2010 to 2016 and was very generous with his kind and inspirational advice, reflecting his deep belief, commitment and wisdom in deepening abolition of the death penalty, and his important reports as Rapporteur. He had been Chair of the UN independent investigation on Burundi, leading on the drafting of UN human rights guidelines on peaceful assembly and the use of less lethal weapons as also on the 2016 Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death. He was the author of highly regarded publications on various human rights issues in leading academic journals. He worked hard to strengthen the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. At the time of his untimely death, he was Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa at the University of Pretoria, where he had mentored and taught several of Africa's leading human rights lawyers, scholars.

Many ICDP Commissioners had the honour to work with Professor Heyns, whose work was shaped by his intelligence, commitment, professionalism and humanism who believed in a rights-centered approach in Africa and internationally. He will be missed by the human rights community. ICDP expresses our heart-felt condolences to his family members.

In the words of ICDP Commissioners who had worked and known Professor Christoph Heyns:

President Judge Navi Pillay: *It is with great sorrow that I note this sad news of Professor Christof Heyns. I had worked with him closely and admired his important work in various aspects of human rights. He has left a great legacy in his country South Africa, in the African continent, at the UN, with his insightful research and in his various capacities in the field of human rights, but he left too soon. He will be missed.*

Commissioner Marzuki Darusman: *This sad news comes as a shock to all of us who have known Prof Heyns as a very good friend and as an enduring source of counsel in our collective human rights work.*

Commissioner Professor Marc Baron Bossuyt: *Professor Heyns was a great human rights expert and particularly active in the UN.*

Commissioner Ambassador Ivan Šimonović: *I worked with Chris in different capacities and on different issues. He was not only a great legal, especially human rights scholar, but a great human being as well.*

Commissioner Marta Santos Pais: *These are deeply sad news and a dramatic loss for the cause of human rights. But Chris' legacy will remain a constant reference and renewed inspiration for us all!*



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## **Background**

Composed of 23 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.

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 23 Member-States from all parts of the world that are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Its Secretariat is based in Madrid.