



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

President

Navanethem (Navi) Pillay

Vice-Presidents

Ruth Dreifuss

Ibrahim Najjar

Members

Louise Arbour

Marc Bossuyt

Marzuki Darusman

Michèle Duvivier Pierre-Louis

Hanne Sophie Greve

Asma Jilani Jahangir

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Bill Richardson

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Horacio Verbitsky

Honorary Members

Giuliano Amato

Robert Badinter

Mohammed Bedjaoui

Federico Mayor Zaragoza

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero

Marta Vilardell

Founding Member

Rodolfo Mattarollo,
(1939-2014)

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Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: ICDP delegation visits the Vatican

On 17 December 2018, a delegation representing the International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) had a private audience with His Holiness, the Pope Francis at the Vatican. The ICDP delegation was led by President Judge Navi Pillay, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and was accompanied by Commissioners: former Minister of Justice of Lebanon and ICDP Vice President Ibrahim Najjar, former President of Philippines Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, former President of Mongolia Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj, former Governor of the US state of New Mexico Bill Richardson, former Assistant UN Secretary General and former Minister of Justice of Croatia Ivan Simonovic. They were accompanied by the ICDP Secretariat represented by Executive Director Asunta Vivó and Policy Director Dr. Rajiv Narayan.

President Judge Navi Pillay led the delegates in congratulating Pope Francis for the recent amendment of the Catholic Church with regard of the death penalty in order to declare it unacceptable under any circumstance” (No.2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the death penalty on 2 August 2018). Pope Francis handed her a copy of his speech and explained the amendment to the Catechism with relation to abolition of the death penalty. During the private audience, ICDP delegates discussed with Pope Francis areas of mutual cooperation with regard to the struggle for the world abolition of the death penalty in countries of concern and future collaboration on increasing support of UN Member States to the UN General Assembly Resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium of the death penalty in 2020. The vote at the UNGA Plenary Session on 17 December was noted. ICDP delegates requested Pope Francis’ support noting his and the Catholic Church’s great moral influence all over the world. The delegation were reassured by Pope Francis that he would “continue working together with you (ICDP) for the abolition of the death penalty. The Church is committed to this and I hope that the Holy See will collaborate with the International Commission against the Death Penalty in the construction of the necessary consensus for the eradication of capital punishment and all forms of cruel punishment.” President Navi Pillay later handed to Pope Francis a copy of the recent ICDP publication: “How States Abolish the Death Penalty: 29 Case-studies.”



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After the private audience, the ICDP delegation held a meeting with the Secretary of State of the Holy See, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, where the Commission followed up on issues discussed with Pope Francis in greater detail. The meeting was productive characterised by an interactive dialogue, a good exchange of ideas of issues and countries of concern in relation to the death penalty. At the end of the meeting, President Navi Pillay handed over to Cardinal Parolin a copy of the recent ICDP publication: "How States Abolish the Death Penalty: 29 Case-studies."

"Pope Francis' deep commitment to the abolition of the death penalty is specified in his letter to former ICDP President Federico Mayor during their private audience in March 2015, and further underlined by the crucial amendment to the Catholic Catechism recognizing the inadmissibility of the death penalty because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person. Moreover, ICDP welcomes the commitment made by Pope Francis that the Church will work with determination for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide and further emphasises his support for the cause by granting this private audience to the Commission on his birthday." said ICDP President Navi Pillay.

Later, the Spanish Ambassador to the Holy See Carmen de la Peña hosted a lunch in honour of the ICDP delegation.

On 17 December evening, the ICDP delegation met with ICDP Commissioner Giuliano Amato, the former Prime Minister of Italy and current President of the Constitutional Court of Italy.

On 18 December, the delegation had a meeting with Senator Emma Bonino, the former Foreign Minister of Italy.

The delegation had an informative meeting with representative of Hands off Cain, a leading civil society organization that has done pioneering work on the issue of abolition of the death penalty. On 18 December, the delegates met representatives of "Community of Sant'Egidio" in order to discuss areas of mutual cooperation in the future.

Judge Navi Pillay
President
International Commission
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Background

Composed of 21 Commissioners, who are persons of high international standing from 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 believing that it violates the right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 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 punishment worldwide.

The work of ICDP is supported by a diverse group of 20 States from all regions of the world that are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Its secretariat is based in Madrid.