



Madrid, 5 July 2021

**International Commission
Against the Death Penalty**

ICDP 07/2021

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Navanethem (Navi) Pillay

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Founding Members

Rodolfo Mattarollo,
(1939-2014)

Asma Jilani Jahangir
(1952-2018)

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Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: USA Attorney General orders halt to federal executions

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) warmly welcomes Attorney General Merrick Garland's order to halt federal executions in the USA on 1 July 2021. Reports suggest that the decision to declare a moratorium on federal executions was made in order for the Justice Department to conduct a review of its policies and procedures.

"ICDP believes that this is a good initial step and notes the justification of the moratorium by Attorney General Merrick Garland that, "(s)erious concerns have been raised about the continued use of the death penalty across the country, including arbitrariness in its application, disparate impact on people of color, and the troubling number of exonerations in capital and other serious cases." More steps need to be taken to ensure that there are no more executions at the federal level including commutations," said the Commission's President Judge Navi Pillay.

Reports reaching ICDP suggest that Attorney General Garland has cited President Joe Biden's strong opposition to capital punishment and also reiterated concerns on the use of capital punishment, which have arisen following several offenders being wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death. In such circumstances, there is always the risk of the execution being carried out of an innocent person. In this regard, ICDP notes that since 1973, in the USA, 185 inmates, under sentence of death, have been exonerated after being wrongfully convicted.

The 1 July 2021 moratorium on executions carried out at the federal level symbolizes a move away from the resumption of executions, after a hiatus of 17 years, on 14 July 2020. An unprecedented 13 people were executed during the final months of the last administration with the last execution being carried out a week before the inauguration of current President Joe Biden.



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“I join my fellow ICDP Commissioners in calling on the Biden administration and the lawmakers in the House of Representatives and the Senate to build on the 1 July 2021 moratorium and bring to an end federal-level capital punishment so that the USA can move towards better respect, protection and fulfilment of the fundamental human right, the right to life. This momentum is essential as it brings hope for life and justice after the colossal tragedy wreaked by the COVID-19 pandemic globally, but especially in the USA,” said President Pillay.

Background

Composed of 24 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 who are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Its Secretariat is based in Madrid.