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ICDP 03/2022

**International Commission
against the Death Penalty**

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Rodolfo Mattarollo,

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**Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: 81
executions carried out in one day by authorities in Saudi Arabia**

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) strongly condemns the reported executions of 81 persons carried out in one day, 12 March 2022, by Saudi Arabian authorities.

Reports reaching ICDP suggest that the persons, whose executions were carried out by beheading, included 41 who belonged to the Shiite minority, seven who were Yemenis and one Syrian national. The Shiites appear to have been found guilty of taking part in the 2011-2012 anti-government protests, which called for greater political participation, while several executions appear to be connected to the war in Yemen.

“The executions of the 81 persons, by Saudi Arabian authorities on 12 March, were conducted secretly, and the relatives of the executed persons were not informed. Some of the persons were charged following trials that did not meet fair trial and due process guarantees. ICDP Commissioners believe that those found guilty of serious crimes should receive appropriate punishment but clearly the capital punishment is not that punishment. In ICDP’s experience, the capital punishment does not lessen the pain of the victims and does not deter crime. Moreover, these mass executions contradicts Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s commitment that his country is limiting its use of the death penalty as part of judicial reforms. The death penalty is a cruel and inhuman punishment that amounts to a denial of human dignity and integrity,” said ICDP President Judge Navi Pillay.

ICDP notes that in 2021, Saudi Arabian authorities had reportedly stated that the government had suspended capital punishment for drug-related offenses. Moreover, its authorities, stated to the UN Human Rights Council, in February 2021, that juvenile offenders, who committed a crime which was applicable with the death penalty, would be subject to a maximum sentence of ten years in a juvenile institution. This commitment followed earlier statements that *hudud* and *qisas* offences are excluded from the 2018 Juvenile Law and the royal decree announced in 2020, reportedly eliminated the death penalty for crimes committed as minors. However, reports reaching ICDP suggest that at least six persons, who were among the 37 people whose executions were carried out on 23 April 2019, were juvenile offenders.

ICDP calls on the Saudi Arabian government to stop carrying out any further executions, to observe a moratorium while carrying out steps to move away from the death penalty and towards the better respect, protection of human dignity. By doing so, Saudi Arabia will join the vast majority of countries, at least 142, who have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice and who have recognized that modern justice systems can protect the public from crime without the irrevocable and cruel nature of the death penalty and the constant risk of executing an innocent



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person. These nations have recognized that state killing is wrong and fails to deter crime more effectively than other punishments.

Background

Composed of 24 Commissioners of high international standing following decades' long, highly respected experiences in public service and representing all regions of the world, ICDP acts with total independence under the guidance of President Judge Navi Pillay.

The Commission promotes the abolition of capital punishment in law in states that observe a *de facto* moratorium on the use of the death penalty and promotes moratoriums on executions in states that retain capital punishment. ICDP works with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, governments, and nongovernmental organizations to advocate for worldwide abolition of the death penalty.

The work of ICDP is supported by a geographically diverse group of 23 Member-States who are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Its Secretariat is based in Madrid and is responsible for the day-to-day work of the Commission.



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