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against the Death Penalty

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Madrid, 27 February 2023

ICDP 01/2023

Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Zambia abolishes the death penalty

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) warmly welcomes the abolition of the death penalty in Zambia's law statutes on 23 December 2022 when President Hakainde Hichilema made history by signing the legislation, which was earlier voted in its Parliament. On 8 February 2023, reports reaching ICDP suggest that President Hichilema commuted the death sentences of the remaining 390 prisoners under sentence of death, including 11 women to terms of life imprisonment.

This abolitionist move was a culmination of steps led by President Hichilema who submitted the bill to repeal capital punishment to Parliament on 25 May 2022, the day which commemorates Africa Freedom Day. He accompanied this announcement by commuting the sentences of 30 prisoners facing the death penalty on the same day, signaling his commitment to the issue of abolition.

"I join my fellow Commissioners in congratulating President Hichilema, the Cabinet of Ministers, legislators on taking these historic steps towards abolition of the death penalty in Zambia as they indicate an important adoption of a direction for the better respect, protection, and fulfilment of the fundamental right to life, towards a more humane and just society. The political leadership that underlines this welcome development in Zambia will inspire other countries in the region, in Africa and around the world," said ICDP President Navi Pillay.

ICDP also calls on the government of Zambia to ratify the Second Optional Protocol of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which would reflect Zambia's abolitionist belief in the international arena. ICDP also calls on the government to follow this repeal of the death penalty in the law statutes by reflecting it in Zambia's Constitution, a step that consolidate the abolition of capital punishment domestically.

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.



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