



International Commission  
against the Death Penalty

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**Vice Presidents**

Ruth Dreifuss  
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Marta Vilardell

**Founding Members**

Rodolfo Mattarollo  
(1939-2014)  
Asma Jilani Jahangir  
(1952-2018)

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North-South Prize  
of the Council of Europe

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**Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Malaysian Parliament votes to abolish the mandatory death penalty**

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) welcomes the passage of a bill, on 3 April 2023, by the Dewan Rakyat – the lower house of Malaysia's Parliament – to abolish mandatory death penalty. ICDP commends Malaysia's leadership in ensuring this historic vote, which should ensure the increased respect, protection, and fulfilment of the fundamental right to life and promotion of human rights, which represents an important beacon of hope in the Southeast Asian region and beyond.

Reports suggest that the vote, which was voted with overwhelming support, removes the death penalty as the mandatory sentence for 11 crimes out of the 34 crimes punishable by death. Judges will reportedly retain discretion to impose capital punishment in exceptional cases. As alternative sentencing, the courts will reportedly sentence those people found guilty with life imprisonment sentences of up to 40 years, or corporal punishment such as caning.

The bill will now be voted by the Dewan Negara, or upper house, where reports suggest that it is expected to be passed, following which the bill will be sent to the King to be signed into law. The new laws once enacted will reportedly apply retrospectively, allowing those under sentence of death 90 days to seek a review of their sentences. Currently, there are reportedly 1,341 such prisoners in the country, more than 60% of whom had received a mandatory sentence.

ICDP congratulates the Malaysian government for its recent move to abolish the mandatory death penalty and grant discretionary sentencing powers to the judiciary. It is a significant step away from the death penalty for Malaysia and the 3 April vote follows the symbolically important vote by the country supporting the UNGA vote on a resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty since 2018. The Commission also notes that Deputy Law Minister Ramkarpal Singh, in his intervention during the discussions before the vote, highlighted that capital punishment had not been an effective deterrent and was an irreversible punishment, as supported by ample research and evidence.

"ICDP Commissioners expresses our high hopes that your government will maintain a moratorium on executions while implementing the Act and considering future steps in reducing the scope of capital punishment," said ICDP President Navi Pillay.

ICDP looks forward to continuing our collaboration with the Malaysian government towards achieving the shared goal of worldwide abolition of the death penalty.

**Background**

Composed of 24 Commissioners of high international standing from all regions of the world, ICDP works with total independence and neutrality under President Navanethem (Navi) Pillay.



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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 advocates for a moratorium 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 group of Member States from all regions of the world that are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Its Secretariat is based in Madrid, Spain, and is responsible for the day-to-day work of the Commission.



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