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against the Death Penalty

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Rodolfo Mattarollo

(1939-2014)

Asma Jilani Jahangir

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Bill Richardson

(1947-2023)

Robert Badinter

(1928-2024)

Secretariat

Pl. Marqués de Salamanca 8

28006 Madrid, Spain

+00 34 91 3799458

info@icomdp.org



North-South Prize
of the Council of Europe



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ICDP 10/2024

Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Four children executed in Somalia

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) strongly condemns the reported executions of four children, on 17 August, carried out by authorities in the Somali state of Puntland. The four children were reportedly found guilty of committing crimes when they were under the age of 18 years while being allegedly associated with Al Shabaab, a group which has been involved in an armed insurgency against the government of Somalia. The executions were carried out despite Somalia being a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which specifically prohibits capital punishment “for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age”. Reports suggest that the four children were among 10 Al Shabab fighters who were executed by firing squad in Puntland after being sentenced to death for involvement in the killings in the city of Galkayo.

According to reports reaching ICDP, the Puntland Age Verification Committee, which included representatives of Puntland authorities, had met with the children and concluded that they were below the 18 years of age at the time of arrest.

“I join ICDP Commissioners in expressing our deep concern at the executions of four children, whose convictions and sentences were issued by military courts, which lack specialized child justice procedures. We call on authorities in Somalia to halt executions, especially of people below the age of 18 years. We also call on the authorities to treat children associated with armed groups as victims, ensuring that they have access to child-friendly judicial procedures and carrying out the urgent implementation of a human rights-centered reform of current judicial procedures to ensure that military courts do not try children, which are in line with provisions for child rights contained in the Puntland Juvenile Justice Act and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Somalia has ratified,” said ICDP President Judge Navi Pillay.

ICDP recognizes the complexities of addressing crimes committed by children associated with armed groups, but these should in no way compromise the enjoyment of the rights and legal safeguards children are entitled to, including their right to freedom from capital punishment. ICDP strongly believes that it is essential to respect and safeguard the well-being of children, to promote child-sensitive restorative justice mechanisms, and to prioritize the rehabilitation and reintegration of children and young people into society. The death penalty not only violates their most fundamental human rights but also perpetuates a cycle of violence. In June 2023, ICDP had published a study on [Children, Youth and the Death Penalty](#).

Background

The International Commission against the Death Penalty is currently composed of 26 Commissioners of high international standing following highly respected careers in public service and representing all regions of the world. The Commission acts with total independence under the leadership 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.



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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 Support Group of 24 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.