



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

President

Navanethem (Navi) Pillay

Vice Presidents

Ruth Dreifuss

Ibrahim Najjar

Members

Michelle Bachelet

Marc Bossuyt

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Giuliano Amato

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Federico Mayor Zaragoza

Martin Joseph O'Malley

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero

Marta Vilardell

Founding Members

Rodolfo Mattarollo

(1939-2014)

Asma Jilani Jahangir

(1952-2018)

Bill Richardson

(1947-2023)

Robert Badinter

(1928-2024)

Secretariat

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ICDP 17/2024

Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: ICDP mourns the passing of Founding President Federico Mayor Zaragoza

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) announces with deep sadness the passing of our beloved Founding President and Honorary Commissioner Federico Mayor Zaragoza on 19 December. As a central figure in the initial shaping of ICDP, Founding President Mayor Zaragoza displayed inspiring, visionary, inclusive leadership and helped the Commission carve a unique niche in the global abolitionist struggle.

Founding President Mayor Zaragoza's extraordinary, rich and accomplished life encompassed achievements as an academic, scientist, politician, educationist, and global advocate for peace, human rights and public health. He was born in Barcelona in 1934; was awarded a Ph.D. in Pharmacy from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid in 1958; and in 1963, he became a Professor of Biochemistry at the Facultad de Farmacia of the Universidad de Granada. In 1968, he became Rector of that institution, a job he held until 1972. The following year, he was named Professor in his specialty at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Among his political responsibilities, Founding President Mayor was Undersecretary of Education and Science for the Spanish Government (1974-75), Member of the Spanish Parliament (1977-78), Adviser to the Prime Minister (1977-78), Minister of Education and Science (1981-82) and Member of the European Parliament (1987). In 1978, he became Assistant Director-General of UNESCO. In 1987, he was elected Director-General of that Organization, and was reelected for a second term in 1993. In 1999, he decided not to run for a third term and, upon returning to Spain, he created the Fundación Cultura de Paz, of which he was Chairman. In December 2002, the Danish Presidency of the European Union named him Chairman of ERCEG (European Research Council Expert Group) for the "knowledge-based economy" that Europe would reach the leadership in 2010. In October 2005, he was appointed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan as co-chair of the High-Level Group for the "Alliance of Civilizations". In all his work, he emphasized the importance of justice, dignity, and human rights.

Founding President Federico Mayor Zaragoza was a gifted author, publishing poetry and essays that reflected his commitment to fairness and humanity. His intellectual range, combined with his unwavering devotion to advancing a culture of peace, solidified his legacy as an influential thinker and advocate for a better world.

ICDP President Navi Pillay expressed her condolences, saying: "We mourn the loss of Founding President Federico Mayor Zaragoza, whose pioneering leadership at ICDP underlined his deep dedication to institution-building, and he made a profound impact in our work, which he always reminded had to be rooted in justice, human rights, human dignity, dialogue, principled political leadership and to fight against discrimination and the marginalised people. He has left an indelible mark in our work and beyond, with his rich legacy of work in Spain, Europe and the world. His vision of a future without the death penalty will guide us as we continue this vital work. We shall miss him. Our deepest sympathies go out to his family, friends, and all who were touched by his exceptional life and achievements,"

As we remember and celebrate the life of Commissioner Federico Mayor Zaragoza, ICDP reaffirms its determination to carry forward his dream for a world free of fear, a world free of violence and a world free of the death penalty. His enduring impact will continue to inspire current and future generations to strive for a more peaceful, just, caring and compassionate world, based in the better respect, fulfilment and protection of the fundamental human right of life.



North-South Prize
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SARIA PREMIO

René Cassin



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Background

The International Commission against the Death Penalty is currently composed of 25 Commissioners of high international standing following highly respected careers in public service. The Commission acts with total independence under the leadership of President Judge Navi Pillay. The work of ICDP is supported by its Support Group of 24 Member States who are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. Both ICDP's Commissioners and Member States of its Support Group come from all regions of the world. ICDP's Secretariat is based in Madrid and is responsible for the day-to-day work of the Commission.

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.



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