International Commission against the Death Penalty

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North-South Prize of the Council of Europe

Madrid, 3 October 2026
ICDP 17/2026

ICDP mourns the passing of Honorary Commissioner Marta Vilardell Coma

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) announces with deep sadness the passing of Honorary Commissioner, Ambassador Marta Vilardell Coma, on 27 September 2026 in Madrid. A trailblazer of Spanish diplomacy and a committed defender of human rights, Ambassador Vilardell served as Spain's Ambassador in Special Mission for Humanitarian and Social Affairs and for the Death Penalty from 2011 to 2017. She served as President of the ICDP Support Group from 2015 to 2017. Her leadership was decisive in strengthening the Commission´s role in the global abolitionist struggle.

Ambassador Vilardell's career was one of many firsts. In 1973, she was among the first women to enter the Spanish diplomatic service. She served in Spain's diplomatic missions in Türkiye, Venezuela, Denmark and Mexico, and as Spain's Ambassador to Malta. From 2007 to 2011 she was Spain's Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, the first woman to hold that post.

In July 2011, the Government of Spain designated her Ambassador in Special Mission for Humanitarian and Social Affairs and for the Death Penalty, a position she held until September 2017. As President of the ICDP Support Group from 2015 to 2017, her contribution to ICDP was fundamental. In 2015, ICDP's Secretariat moved from Geneva to Madrid and, in 2016, ICDP was registered as an association under Spanish law, milestones that Ambassador Vilardell was key in enabling. In recognition of these contributions, she was named an Honorary Commissioner of ICDP in 2016.

"We mourn the loss of Honorary Commissioner Marta Vilardell Coma, a woman of remarkable courage and integrity who opened doors for others in diplomacy and never wavered in her conviction that the death penalty has no place in a just society. Her support was decisive in consolidating ICDP's position in Spain and in strengthening our work at a critical moment. She combined the rigour of a seasoned diplomat with a profound commitment to human dignity, and she leaves an indelible mark on our Commission and on the abolitionist movement. Our deepest sympathies go out to her family, her friends and colleagues, and all who had the privilege of working with her," said ICDP President Judge Navi Pillay.

As the Commission remembers and honours the life of Ambassador Marta Vilardell Coma, ICDP reaffirms its determination to carry forward her commitment to a world free of the death penalty. Her example of principled, patient and tireless diplomacy will continue to inspire current

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and future generations to work for a more just, humane and compassionate world, grounded in the respect, fulfilment and protection of the fundamental human right to life.

Background

The International Commission against the Death Penalty is currently composed of 27 Commissioners of high international standing following highly respected careers in public service and human rights. ICDP's work is supported by a Support Group of 24 Member States who are committed to the abolition of the death penalty and, like the Commissioners, represent 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.

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. Its Secretariat is based in Madrid and is responsible for the day-to-day work of the Commission.

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