International Commission against the Death Penalty

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Ahead of the World Day against the Death Penalty, ICDP and IPU organized a panel on the Role of Parliamentarians in the Abolition of the Death Penalty in Arusha during the 153rd IPU Assembly

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) organized a panel discussion on "The Role of Parliamentarians in the Abolition of the Death Penalty" on the sidelines of the 153rd IPU Assembly in Arusha. The panel, which was thought-provoking and highly regarded, was moderated by Ms. Claudia Roth, Member of the German Bundestag and former Vice-President of the Bundestag; ICDP Commissioners Barbara Lochbihler, former Member of the European Parliament, and Sylvie Kayitesi, former Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Rwanda and former Commissioner and Chairperson of the Working Group on the Death Penalty in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; Ms. Millie Odhiambo, Member of Parliament of Kenya; and Mr. Chonlathan "Ice" Supphaiboonlerd, Member of Parliament of Thailand. Kenya and Thailand are death penalty retentionist countries. Speakers reviewed global, African trends on the death penalty and shared national experiences, challenges and good practices in advancing reform. The side-event reflects the longstanding partnership between the IPU and ICDP to strengthen parliamentary engagement on abolition and human rights.

Participants agreed that parliamentarians remain decisive for abolition, through legislation (as the Lebanese Parliament did in August 2026), oversight, fair trial safeguards, public engagement, holding consultations with civil society, and for voting for their countries to make the international abolitionist commitment to become State Party to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (as Suriname´s Parliament did in July 2026).

The discussion took place at a time of contrasts. In August 2026, Lebanon became the 114th country to abolish the death penalty for all crimes. Yet Amnesty International recorded at least 2,707 executions in 2025, the highest number since 1981. These executions were carried out in 17 countries, while at least 140 countries have abolished the death penalty in law and practice.

"Africa has been the continent leading the abolitionist trend. Since 2020, Chad, Sierra Leone, the Central African Republic, Zambia have abolished the death penalty for all crimes, while Equatorial Guinea, Ghana have abolished capital punishment for ordinary crimes and Zimbabwe has abolished the death penalty except during a state of national emergency. Noting this trend, ICDP also calls on African Union Member States to advance the adoption of the Draft Protocol to the African Charter on

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Human and Peoples' Rights on the Abolition of the Death Penalty in Africa," said ICDP Commissioner Sylvie Kayitesi.

As the World Day against the Death Penalty approaches on 10 October, ICDP calls on parliamentarians in all regions to use their legislative, oversight and advocacy powers to move their countries away from the death penalty, eventually towards abolition.

"Parliaments are where abolition becomes law. Every country that has abolished the death penalty has done so because legislators showed political leadership and thereby create a legacy for life which significantly reduces the space for related human rights violations. The experiences shared in Arusha show that there is no single path to abolition. It could be by restricting the scope of death penalty, adopting a moratorium, strengthening fair trial guarantees on their journey to abolishing capital punishment," said ICDP Commissioner Barbara Lochbihler.

ICDP thanks the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Ms. Claudia Roth and all the speakers and participants for their important contributions.

Background

The International Commission against the Death Penalty, established in 2010, is currently composed of 26 Commissioners of high international standing from all regions of the world, under the leadership of President Judge Navi Pillay, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. ICDP's work is supported by a geographically diverse Support Group of 24 Member States committed to the abolition of the death penalty. The Commission acts with total independence.

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 organisations, governments and non-governmental organisations 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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