

**EC  
PM**

**TOGETHER  
AGAINST  
THE DEATH  
PENALTY**



**reasons to abolish  
the death penalty**

**Today, three-quarters of the world's states have either abolished capital punishment or no longer carry out executions. Universal abolition is gaining ground year by year. Yet the death penalty remains a tragic reality for tens of thousands of people sentenced to death and their loved ones. Every year, around 15 states continue to carry out executions.**

**Because opposing the death penalty upholds our humanity and dignity,**

**here are  reasons  
to fight for abolition  
worldwide**

**The death  
penalty  
is...**

# a violation of human rights



**The death penalty is first and foremost an infringement of the right to life – a fundamental right enshrined in several international conventions.**

*“Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.”*

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 3

*“Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his/her life.”*

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 6

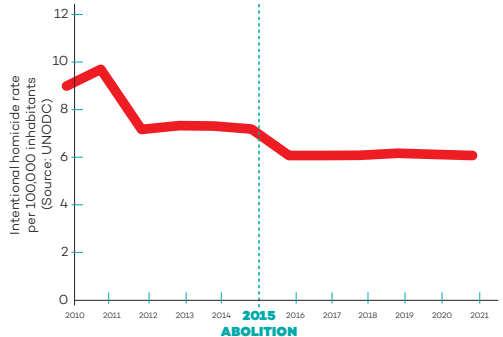
*“Each State Party shall take all necessary measures to abolish the death penalty within its jurisdiction.”*

Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 1 – the only international treaty providing for total abolition.

# not a deterrent

**The death penalty is ineffective in combating crime and does not make societies safer.** There is no scientific consensus that the death penalty has a more dissuasive effect on crime than other penalties. Social, economic and judicial factors play a more decisive role in reducing crime.

Most criminologists agree that the most serious crimes are often committed in the heat of the moment, impulsively, or by people who are not thinking about the legal consequences of their actions.

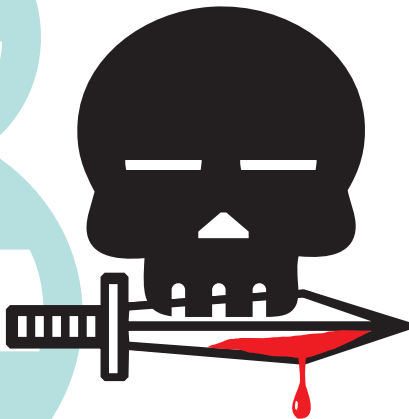


**IN MONGOLIA, FOR EXAMPLE,  
THE HOMICIDE RATE DID NOT INCREASE  
AFTER ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY**

**AMONG THE 20 SAFEST COUNTRIES  
IN THE WORLD\*, 16 HAVE ABOLISHED  
THE DEATH PENALTY**

\* according to the Global Peace Index 2025

# revenge, not justice



**"AN EYE FOR AN EYE LEAVES  
THE WHOLE WORLD BLIND."**

Mahatma Gandhi

**The death penalty  
perpetuates a cycle  
of violence and suffering,  
whereas justice aims  
to repair society.**

While the desire for revenge is human, it is an emotional, immediate and individual reaction. In contrast, a court decision must be impartial, considered and collective. The use of the death penalty is rooted in the most common interpretation of the ancient law of retaliation, summed up by the phrase "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

# irreversible

**Miscarriages of justice exist – the death penalty kills innocent people around the world.**

A lack of resources, expertise and independence of law enforcement and justice systems are among the main causes of wrongful convictions. Numerous cases show how the death penalty leads to irreversible errors. Iwao Hakamata's story has become a global symbol. Sentenced in Japan for a crime he always denied, he spent over 46 years in solitary confinement on death row, the longest case ever recorded. Released in 2014, he was definitively exonerated in 2025.

**"JUSTICE IS RENDERED BY FALLIBLE HUMANS. NOTHING WILL EVER PREVENT MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE."**

Robert Badinter, ECPM Honorary President



**USA**  
**SINCE 1973,**  
**200 DEATH-ROW**  
**PRISONERS**  
**HAVE BEEN**  
**EXONERATED\***

\* according to the Death Penalty Information Center

# torture

## AT ARREST

**IN CAMEROON, 24 DIFFERENT METHODS OF TORTURE, USED TO BREAK AND HUMILIATE ARRESTED INDIVIDUALS, HAVE BEEN DOCUMENTED.**

## DURING INVESTIGATION

**IN EGYPT, NUMEROUS DEATH ROW PRISONERS REPORT HAVING BEEN TORTURED REPEATEDLY TO EXTRACT CONFESSIONS.**



## DURING DETENTION

**DEATH ROW SYNDROME REFERS TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SUFFERING CAUSED BY THE WAIT AND UNCERTAINTY SURROUNDING EXECUTION. IN UGANDA, THIS PERIOD OF WAITING HAS BEEN RULED UNCONSTITUTIONAL WHEN IT EXCEEDS 3 YEARS.**

## AT EXECUTION

**PAINFUL AND HUMILIATING METHODS OF EXECUTION HAVE BEEN RECOGNISED AS TORTURE AND THEREFORE CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL LAW. TO DATE, NO METHOD HAS BEEN PROVEN TO BE PAINLESS AND RESPECTFUL OF HUMAN DIGNITY.**

**From arrest to execution, the death penalty process is inevitably marked by physical and psychological suffering, both for those sentenced to death and for their loved ones.**

This suffering can amount to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, prohibited by numerous international and regional legal instruments.

# discriminatory

**Discrimination exists in law and in practice.** It may be enshrined in law (in grounds for conviction), or inherent in legal proceedings. In many countries, the quality of the defence and verdict are greatly affected by the accused's financial means. It may also be affected by the gender, sexual orientation, race, skin colour, religion or ethnic background of the accused or their witnesses, lawyers, etc. As a result, marginalised and vulnerable groups are disproportionately represented on death row.

**AS OF 2024, HOMOSEXUALITY  
WAS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH  
IN 12 COUNTRIES**

**INDIA**  
**74%**  
**OF PEOPLE SENTENCED  
TO DEATH ARE  
ECONOMICALLY VULNERABLE**

(Project 39A)

**SAUDI ARABIA**  
**42%**  
**OF EXECUTIONS FOR  
"TERRORISM"-RELATED  
OFFENCES BETWEEN 2014  
AND 2025 INVOLVED  
MEMBERS OF THE SHIA  
MINORITY**

(Amnesty International)

**USA**  
**38%**  
**OF THOSE SENTENCED  
TO DEATH IN 2024  
WERE BLACK**

(Death Penalty Information Center)

**IRAN**  
**19%**  
**OF PEOPLE EXECUTED  
BETWEEN 2022 AND 2024  
WERE FROM THE BALUCH  
MINORITY**

(Iran Human Rights)

**KENYA**  
**2/3**  
**OF DEATH ROW PRISONERS  
INTERVIEWED HAD NOT  
RECEIVED EDUCATION  
BEYOND PRIMARY  
SCHOOL**

(The Death Penalty Project)

## **Comparison with proportion of the general population:**

The Baluch population represents 4% of the Iranian population; the Shia population represents 11% of the Saudi Arabian population; Black people represent 14% of the US population; and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Kenyans do not receive education beyond primary level.



# a tool of political repression



**The death penalty is used as a tool of oppression, repression of the population and diplomatic leverage.**

In some countries, merely expressing an opinion can lead to a death sentence. Capital punishment is often used as a tool to exert diplomatic pressure, with foreign nationals on death row being used as bargaining chips.

**IRAN: MORE THAN 10,000 PEOPLE WERE EXECUTED BETWEEN 2008 AND 2025. WIDESPREAD USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY IS ONE OF THE REGIME'S MAIN TOOLS TO INSTILL FEAR IN SOCIETY.**

# traumatising

## **The death penalty creates other victims.**

From arrest to execution, suffering and trauma extend to the families and loved ones of those sentenced to death. Some of the system's actors, including lawyers, jurors, judges, prosecutors, executioners and prison staff, may also experience psychological trauma.

*"The post-traumatic stress associated with the responsibility of killing human beings and the difficulty processing one's own physical contribution to the death of another must never be ignored."*

Aramis Ayala, State Attorney, Florida, USA

*"Some people treat us as if we aren't from a good family. I know that my children have struggled at school since their father has been behind bars."*

Anna, wife of a death row prisoner in Malaysia



# an obstacle to truth



**The right to the truth is the right to know the absolute and whole truth about the offences committed,** the circumstances surrounding them, the people involved and their motives. Because the justice system is fallible, the death penalty is a major obstacle to the right to the truth. Not all victims' families support the death penalty, nor does it guarantee reparation.

*"I won't be at the trial on Monday, I don't have the courage. But I want justice to be done, I want remorse, apologies... I'm still opposed to the death penalty, even for my son's killer... I want to know what was going through that terrorist's mind."*

Khadija Arfaoui, Tunisian academic and mother of a victim of a terrorist attack

# incompatible with rehabilitation



**The death penalty denies the principle of a second chance.**

Yet one of the objectives of justice is to rehabilitate and reintegrate the perpetrators of offences, in order to restore balance and peace in the community.

*"I spent 18 years on death row. After my release, I got a law degree and founded an association defending prisoners' rights in Africa."*

Pete Ouko, former death row prisoner, Kenya



Since 2000, ECPM has been fighting capital punishment by uniting and mobilising abolitionist forces around the world. We conduct advocacy in international fora, educate, inform and raise awareness among citizens, strengthen the capacities of abolitionist actors and take action alongside them at the local level.

**FIND OUR CAMPAIGNS  
AND ALL OUR PUBLICATIONS  
AT [WWW.ECPM.ORG](http://WWW.ECPM.ORG)**

Some examples cited in this document are taken from ECPM and partner publications: death row fact-finding mission reports, Proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress Against the Death Penalty (2019), Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran (2025).

Other statistical sources include:

*Amnesty International, Death Penalty Information Center, Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, Project 39A and The Death Penalty Project.*

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**The abolition of the death penalty  
is a major social and legal advance  
for humanity – one to which each  
of us can contribute.**

**Together, let's take action.**



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