10 October 2024

Joint Statement calling for the universal abolition of the death penalty

As representatives of the profession of lawyer in various parts of the world, committed to the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law, the undersigned organisations join voices in a unified call for the universal abolition of the death penalty, recognising the inherent dignity of every individual and the fundamental right to life.

The right to life is guaranteed by all major international and regional human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 3), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 6), the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 2), Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights abolishing the death penalty in peacetime and Protocol No. 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights concerning the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances.

The death penalty is irreversible, prone to error, and has the potential to disproportionately affect marginalised and vulnerable communities. Its application is therefore not only incompatible with the values enshrined in various international human rights legal instruments, but it also undermines the pursuit of justice and the advancement of a fair and humane legal system.

The death penalty does not fulfil what should be the primary objective of sentencing in criminal proceedings, which is to reintegrate individuals into society. Moreover, evidence does not support the idea that the death penalty serves as an effective deterrent against crime.

In this context, the undersigned organisations remain deeply concerned about the persistence of the death penalty in many countries around the world, as well as its possible resurgence in some countries where it has been abolished.

The undersigned organisations strongly believe that the abolition of the death penalty is not only a crucial step towards building a world where the inherent worth of every individual is respected, and justice is pursued in a manner that upholds the principles of fairness, humanity, and the rule of law, but also contributes to the fostering and protection of human dignity and human rights. The undersigned organisations, therefore, urge all countries where the death penalty still exists to abolish it and, pending this, to impose a moratorium on it, and to adhere fully to the right to life. Furthermore, the undersigned organisations urge all countries that have adopted a moratorium on the death penalty to continue applying it and not to revoke it.

Additionally, the undersigned organisations encourage authorities and all relevant actors of society to engage in constructive dialogues, share best practices, and support one another in the pursuit of alternative, humane, and effective measures to address crime and protect society in a manner consistent with the protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

List of signatories

Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)

European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH)

Afghanistan Independent Bar Association In Exile (AIBAIE)

Vereinigung Demokratischer Juristinnen und Juristen e.V.

Berlin Bar Association

Public Association "Dignity"

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

Avocats solidaires – Défense sans frontières

International Association of People's Lawyers (IAPL)

UIA–IROL
(Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers)

International Observatory for Lawyers in Danger (OIAD) / Observatoire International des Avocats en Danger (OIAD)

Ordre français des avocats du barreau de Bruxelles



Institut des droits de l'homme du barreau de Bruxelles



Warsaw Bar Association of Advocates



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF YOUNG LAWYERS

AIJA – International Association of Young Lawyers – Human Rights Committee



Law Council of Australia



Avocats sans Frontières (Belgique)



Human Rights Embassy



European Criminal Bar Association





Ordine degli Avvocati di Venezia
Venice Bar Association (Italy)



Unione delle Camere Penali Italiane
Union of the Italian Criminal Chambers



Ordine degli Avvocati di Padova



Foundation "Day of the Endangered Lawyer"