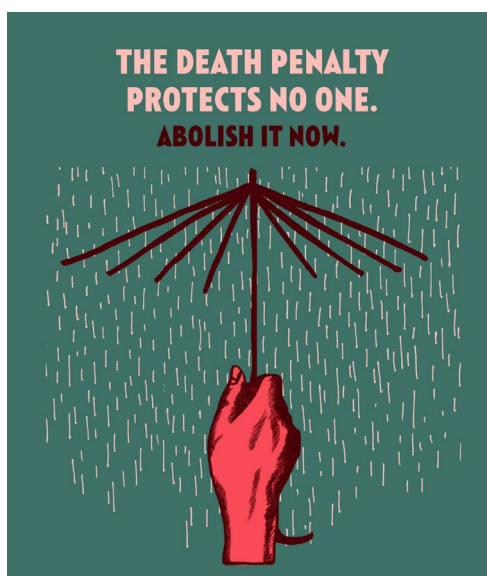


STATEMENT

Paris, 10 October 2025

Statement on the 2025 World Day Against the Death Penalty

**SECURITY, JUSTICE AND THE DEATH PENALTY:
A FALSE DILEMMA**



To mark the 23rd World Day Against the Death Penalty, the Institute for the Rule of Law of the Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA-IROL) joins the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty and abolitionist advocates around the world to commemorate this day. The Institute reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the universal abolition of capital punishment in all circumstances. The theme selected this year, “The Death Penalty and Security”, underscores an essential truth: the death penalty protects no one.

For decades, scientific data and comparative experiences across States have shown no correlation between the severity of punishment and a reduction in crime. Yet, in response to actual or perceived threats to national or public security, some governments continue to invoke capital punishment as a supposedly effective solution. In reality, far from protecting societies, the death penalty is an ineffective deterrent, a grave violation of human rights amounting to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, a discriminatory mechanism that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable, and an irreversible sanction that exposes judicial systems to the risk of fatal error. Death sentences are also frequently handed down after proceedings that fail to respect the right to a fair trial.

Ensuring security is a fundamental responsibility of States. However, security must not be confused with repression. Security depends on strong, independent, accessible, and equitable justice institutions capable of addressing the root causes of crime: social and economic inequalities, discrimination, and marginalization. Far from strengthening social peace, the use of the death penalty fuels violence and undermines trust in the rule of Law. Justice cannot be reduced to vengeance; it must ensure the protection of victims, the reintegration of offenders, and social cohesion.

In different contexts, whether in the fight against terrorism, in situations of armed conflict, in cases of political repression, or for drug-related offences, the death penalty is used as a symbolic or political instrument. It is presented as a response to collective fears but contributes neither to reducing crime nor to restoring social trust. Such instrumentalization instead weakens democratic foundations and the safeguards of the rule of law.

In 2024, more than 1,500 people were executed in 15 States worldwide, including for offences that do not fall within the category of “most serious crimes”¹, such as drug-related offences or blasphemy, notably in Southeast Asia, Iran and China, where the number of death sentences remains secret.²

UIA-IROL urges retentionist States to establish an immediate moratorium on executions as a first step toward abolition. It calls on *de facto* abolitionist governments to take the necessary steps to legally abolish the death penalty in domestic law. It encourages all States to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Finally, it calls on the international community to promote security policies that respect human rights, foster restorative justice and prevent violence.

True security can only arise from respect for human dignity, fair justice, and the rule of law. By denying these values, the death penalty offers nothing but an illusion of protection.

UIA-IROL stands alongside all those around the world who advocate for a future where justice is achieved without executions.

More about UIA-IROL

The Institute for the Rule of Law of the Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA-IROL) promotes the Rule of Law and supports and defends, in particular, (1) lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are harassed, threatened and/or persecuted in the exercise of their professions, (2) the independence of the legal and judicial professions, and (3) the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, especially in defense of human rights.

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¹ Article 6(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights limits the application of the death penalty to “the most serious crimes”, that is, crimes involving intentional killing, in accordance with [General Comment No. 36](#) of the Human Rights Committee (para. 39).

² Amnesty International, Global Report “[Death Sentences and Executions 2024](#)”