

Crime and Justice

Death Penalty and the Right to Life

A Monthly Newsletter for Strengthening Awareness on the Abolition of Death Penalty



April 2011

April 2011



CRIME AND JUSTICE

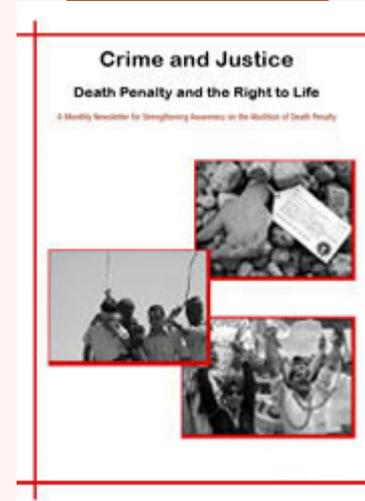
A Monthly Newsletter for Strengthening Awareness
on the Abolition of Death Penalty



This page includes news
coverage which is part of
a project funded by the
European Union

IPS, the global news agency, brings you independent news and views on capital punishment. In this newsletter you will find in-depth reports by IPS correspondents from around the world and columns by experts, in addition to special sections for news from international NGOs and a review of the global media for a glimpse of what is happening on the ground. Join us in helping strengthen awareness about the abolition of death penalty – and encourage your friends and colleagues to subscribe to this free monthly newsletter.

[Download as PDF](#)



U.S. High Court Rejects High-Profile Death Penalty Appeal

By Matthew Cardinale

ATLANTA, Georgia, Mar 29 (IPS) - The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Monday that it would not hear an appeal by death row inmate Troy Davis, in what could be the end of the legal road for the Georgia prisoner whose case has garnered international support.

[MORE >>](#)

Death Sentence Looms for Filipino Drug Mules in China

By Kara Santos

MANILA, Mar 28 (IPS) - Time is running short for three Filipino workers in China. Ramon Credo, Elizabeth Batain and Sally Villanueva - who were convicted of smuggling heroin in 2008 - are set to be executed by lethal injection Mar. 30.

[MORE >>](#)

Q&A: New Victory Against Death Penalty in U.S.

Aline Cunico interviews RICHARD DIETER, Executive Director of the Death Penalty Information Center

NEW YORK, Mar 10 (IPS) - After trying unsuccessfully for years to design a flawless death penalty system, Democratic Governor Pat Quinn signed a bill Wednesday abolishing capital punishment in the state of Illinois.

[MORE >>](#)

WORLD PRESS REVIEW:

TURKEY: PM SAYS GOV'T NOT CONTEMPLATING RETURN OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT - SRI LANKA: THREE ARMY MEN SENTENCED TO DEATH - DANISH COMPANY REJECTS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT BUT WON'T STOP US EXECUTION DRUG - CHINA: THREE FILIPINOS EXECUTED FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING - JAPAN: DEATH SENTENCES FINALISED FOR 3 MEN - ARIZONA (USA): INMATE EXECUTED AMID QUESTIONS OVER DRUG - KUWAIT CONDEMNNS THREE TO DEATH IN IRAN SPY RING - TAJIKISTAN: MAJORITY OF POPULATION AGAINST DEATH PENALTY - KAZAKHSTAN: TOWARDS DEFINITIVE ABOLITION - U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS BODY APPROVES INVESTIGATOR ON IRAN - CHINA APPROVES DEATH SENTENCE FOR 7 IN XINJIANG - VIETNAM: COURT GIVES NIGERIAN DEATH SENTENCE FOR DRUG SMUGGLING - MALDIVES: MP WITHDRAWS DEATH PENALTY AMENDMENT - SOMALIA: GALMUDUG COURT CARRIES OUT DEATH PENALTY - MAURITANIA: FOUR MAURITANIANS SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR ATTACK AGAINST ARMY - IRAN TO EXPEDITE EXECUTION SENTENCES - PAKISTAN DEATH ROW PRISONERS 'LANGUISH IN JAIL' - SAUDI ARABIA: PHILANTHROPIST PAYS BLOOD MONEY, FOUR INDIANS ON DEATH ROW PARDONED - TAIWAN: DOCTORS TRANSPLANT ORGANS TAKEN FROM EXECUTED PRISONERS - SAUDI ARABIA: DAD'S PARDON SAVES THREE CONVICTS FROM GALLOWES -

News from International NGOs:

PRI LAUNCHES PROJECT AGAINST THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS AND TB IN KAZAKHSTAN'S WOMEN'S PRISONS - PRI Briefings - DEATH PENALTY IN 2010: EXECUTING COUNTRIES LEFT ISOLATED AFTER DECADE OF PROGRESS - DEATHS IN IRANIAN PRISON MUST BE INVESTIGATED - ILLINOIS ABOLISHES THE DEATH PENALTY - LATEST EXECUTIONS: A HUGE STEP BACK FOR JUSTICE IN TAIWAN - THE FUTURE OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE UNITED STATES -

IPS has partnered with [Penal Reform International](#) to expand its independent coverage of issues surrounding capital punishment and long-term imprisonment.

The contents of this publication, funded by the European Union, are the sole responsibility of IPS and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Copyright © 2011 IPS-Inter Press Service. All rights reserved.

PROJECT ARTICLES

U.S. High Court Rejects High-Profile Death Penalty Appeal

By Matthew Cardinale

AATLANTA, Georgia, Mar 29, 2011 (IPS) - The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Monday that it would not hear an appeal by death row inmate Troy Davis, in what could be the end of the legal road for the Georgia prisoner whose case has garnered international support.

The Court had granted Davis an extraordinary opportunity in August 2009 for a new hearing in the lower federal court to determine whether he could receive a new trial, after his attorneys presented the justices with an innocence claim.

Davis was convicted in 1989 for the murder of police officer Mark McPhail. There was no physical evidence of his guilt, and no weapon was ever found.

Seven out of nine of the original witnesses who testified against Davis have since recanted, putting Davis's guilt strongly in doubt. The case has attracted global attention, including from Pope Benedict XVI, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Rev. Al Sharpton, and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Davis's lawyers are currently reviewing whether they have any legal recourse left. If Davis is again scheduled for execution in the state of Georgia - he has been scheduled three previous times - he will be able to appeal to the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles, another long shot.

"It's not over until God says it's over," Kimberly Davis, one of Troy Davis's sisters, told IPS by telephone. "We're standing strong on our faith and we're not going to give up. Because God did not bring us this far to leave us."

The High Court's response was very brief: "The appeal is dismissed, and the petition for a writ of habeas corpus and a common law writ of certiorari is denied."

A two-fold appeal

At this point, Davis's attorneys were making a two-fold appeal, which was filed with the Supreme Court in January 2011.

First, Davis was appealing the decision from the new evidentiary hearing he received in August 2010, in which Federal Judge William T. Moore decided Davis had failed to clearly establish his

innocence.

Second, Davis was appealing the 11th Circuit Court of Appeal's decision in November 2010, where the court stated it was doubtful as to whether it had jurisdiction to hear Davis's appeal.

Martina Correia, another of Davis's sisters, noted that there have been significant changes in the U.S. Supreme Court over the last two years.

Notably, Justice John Paul Stevens, one of the strongest critics of the death penalty, retired in June 2010.

"The dynamic of the court has changed. We lost Justice Stevens, who changed his views on the death penalty and has been very vocal. We have two new members. We actually lost the majority that we had," Correia said, referring to the majority that remanded Davis's case back to the federal court two years ago.

While both judicial appointments were made by President Barack Obama, a Democrat, Correia noted that no one knew where the new justices, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, stood on death penalty issues.

Good 'ol boys?

Correia also said she was worried about her brother getting a fair hearing when it was announced that his new hearing would be held in the same town of Savannah, Georgia, where she claims a "Good Ol' Boy" network protects itself.

"I was always concerned about that, and the fact they brought the case here, back to Savannah. We knew it would not be a level playing field," Correia said.

"The judge said he would believe the police officers more than the witnesses because the witnesses had a criminal history. These are the same witnesses you used to convict Troy. Back then you were calling them Mr. and Ms. So-and-so, like they were the best thing in the world. Now you're calling them a criminal," she said.

According to Correia, one recanting witness testified to having been coerced by the police to say Davis was guilty, but his latest testimony was ignored.

"From time to time during the court, the judge was asleep. We're looking at him, he's dozing off," Correia said.

"We've stood up, we've put ourselves out there to be exposed to the world and the court says so what, the police

have more integrity than you do," she said. "No matter what Troy's lawyers had to present, it would never have been good enough because the judge had a preconceived notion that he wouldn't provide relief."

Kathryn Hamoudah, board chair of Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, said, "The case of Troy Davis exemplifies all that is wrong with Georgia's death penalty system. Of grave concern is the real threat of executing an innocent person."

"Proceeding with the execution of Troy Davis would be callous, careless and irreversible. The state should... slow down to address the well-documented, serious problems with a system that irreversibly takes human life, rather than rush to carry out an execution of a possibly innocent man," Hamoudah said.

"Amnesty International is extremely disappointed that the Supreme Court rejected Troy Davis's appeal," said Laura Moye, death penalty abolition campaign director at Amnesty International USA.

According to a report released Monday by Amnesty, the death penalty is on the decline in the U.S. overall. At least 110 death sentences were imposed in the

country during 2010, which is only one-third of the number of death sentences imposed in the mid-1990s and is lower than in any year since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976.

In March, Illinois became the 16th U.S. state to abolish the death penalty.
(END)

Death Sentence Looms for Filipino Drug Mules in China

By Kara Santos

MANILA, Mar 28, 2011 (IPS) - Time is running short for three Filipino workers in China. Ramon Credo, Elizabeth Batain and Sally Villanueva - who were convicted of smuggling heroin in 2008 - are set to be executed by lethal injection Mar. 30.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) announced that the Fujian People's Court and Guangdong High People's Court have informed the Philippine Consulates General in Xiamen and Guangzhou of the date of execution. Foreign Affairs Department Spokesman Eduardo Malaya told reporters that Credo and Villanueva would be executed in Xiamen while Batain's sentence would be carried out in Shenzhen.

As the date nears, the global alliance of overseas workers and their families - Migrante International - said it would continue to appeal to the Chinese government to commute the death sentences on humanitarian grounds and stop the execution of the three Filipinos.

According to Amnesty International (AI) a significant proportion of the executions or death sentences recorded in 2010 were for drug-related offences - at times in direct contradiction of international human rights law. AI stressed that a total of 31 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice during the last 10 years but China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the U.S. and Yemen remain amongst the most frequent executioners.

According to Migrante International Chairperson Garry Martinez, like many other Filipinos, the three facing death row are either victims of international drug syndicates, or victims of poverty and hopelessness.

"Most, if not all, drug mules are either overseas Filipino workers [OFWs] in distress or victims of illegal recruitment or human trafficking. Even [Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency] chief Dionisio Santiago confirmed this when

he said that those desperate for money are the ones victimised by international drug syndicates," Martinez told IPS.

Martinez claims that the Philippine government did not do enough to help the three and remained resigned to the fact that China has a strict policy in carrying out the death penalty for drug smuggling.

"We respect the laws of the land our countrymen work in, but what we want is for our government to give legal assistance to overseas workers in times of need," Martinez said on the sidelines of a protest rally for the three sentenced to death. "In our experience, we have seen so many fellow countrymen executed and given life sentences without ever even seeing a lawyer."

During the rally, a dozen supporters carried banners and held up pictures of the three Filipinos while chanting: "Save the lives of OFWs on death row." A large makeshift hourglass filled with sand signified how time was running out for the three, and supporters lit candles in hopes that their lives would still be spared.

According to Martinez, there are currently 125 Filipinos on death row

around the world. In China alone, there are 208 Filipinos with drug-related cases - 72 of these face death sentences, but could still face reprieve within two years.

The government does not provide legal assistance to OFWs in foreign countries, Grace, a former overseas worker who declined to give her last name, told IPS. "Migrant workers are the ones who are saving the economy from crisis through their remittances, but when they need help, the government does not offer them any assistance."

One tenth of the country's population works abroad, from where, according to central bank data, they send home more than 18 billion dollars to their families.

"As soon as my pending case is settled, I plan to go back and find work in Taiwan because there are really no opportunities or fair wages here in our country. Even if it hurts to leave my family, I have to force myself to work abroad just so that I can give them a better life," Grace told IPS.

In a press statement, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said that the Philippine government provided all possible legal assistance to the three

convicted drug mules, but said it has to respect the ruling of the Supreme People's Court of China. "Their legal rights were respected and observed, and their welfare protected from the time of their arrests and throughout the judicial process, and even up to this very day," according to the DFA.

The department stressed its appeal to Filipinos not to allow themselves to be victimised by international drug syndicates and to be extremely cautious when dealing with strangers in airports and other areas of transit. "We wish to stress that vigilance is the first major step in combating the modus operandi of international drug traffickers."

While some overseas workers are victimised by drug syndicates, poverty is seen as the main reason why others resort to desperate measures like drug trafficking to make ends meet.

One in four Filipinos live on less than one dollar a day. According to news reports, drug mules or couriers are paid anywhere between 500 and 5,000 dollars to swallow tubes containing drugs, carry them hidden in their luggage or dissolved and soaked into paper or books.

"If only our Philippine authorities have

been more watchful over the plight of Filipinos here and abroad and have provided them much-needed assistance, they would not be forced to engage with drug syndicates," says Martinez. "Instead of dousing their hopes, give them protection."

As Grace puts it: "Migrant workers send billions of remittances home every year. If only the government would use it for developing industries here, then people will not be forced to leave the country in search for better jobs."

Migrante, including chapters in the Middle East, plan to hold daily actions including vigils and rallies for all Filipinos on death row. "Unlike the government, we are not losing hope," says Martinez. "While there is still time, let us press the government to use it to exhaust any and all means to save the lives of Villanueva, Batain and Credo."
(END)

Q&A: New Victory Against Death Penalty in U.S.

Aline Cunico interviews RICHARD DIETER, Executive Director of the Death Penalty Information Center

NEW YORK, Mar 10, 2011 (IPS) - After trying unsuccessfully for years to design a flawless death penalty system, Democratic Governor Pat Quinn signed a bill Wednesday abolishing capital punishment in the state of Illinois.

The new bill represents a milestone in the United States, where capital punishment is still used in 34 states, costing exorbitant amounts of taxpayer money and, critics say, carrying the strong risk that an innocent person will be executed.

In an interview with IPS, Richard Dieter, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, explains what this new victory represents to the abolition movement in the United States, and why the death penalty should be abandoned in all the other states.

Q: What will this represent to the abolition movement in the U.S.?

A: It will be a major milestone in a long trend away from the death penalty in the U.S. No state has studied the death penalty and its problems more carefully than Illinois. For the people and their representatives to come to the conclusion that the death penalty simply cannot be fixed and should be ended would be a strong statement for

the rest of the country that the death penalty may be in its final phase.

In other states, executions and death sentences are on the decline. Yet enormous amounts of money continue to be spent on a programme that returns nothing to society.

Q: Why do some states still have the death penalty and is the system effective?

A: The death penalty in the U.S. has a long history, going back 400 years. It is difficult to uproot such a tradition all at once. But many states are considering legislation to abolish the death penalty and it's clear that other states will follow Illinois in abolishing it. States that have a lot of executions may be defensive about that process and reluctant to say that those lives should not have been taken.

Few believe that the death penalty is effective. The main argument for keeping it is the belief that certain crimes can only be punished by the death penalty. But as more states prove that even when punishing for horrendous crimes, they are better off without the death penalty, the strength of that argument fades.

Q: Is it more expensive for the state to keep inmates in prison for life, or to apply capital punishment?

A: The death penalty system is far more expensive than a system that punishes the worst offenders with life in prison. The legal costs of preparing for a death penalty trial, the trial itself, the appeals, and the higher expense of death row overwhelm the costs of even 40 years in prison.

A death sentence, counting all the related expenses, costs the taxpayer about three million dollars, whereas a life sentence costs about one million dollars.

Q: There could still be executions in Illinois, since the law won't be applied retroactively. What do you think should happen to the prisoners who have been waiting on death row for so many years?

A: The law in Illinois will not be retroactive and current death row inmates may still face execution. The governor could commute their death sentences to life or courts could find their death sentences to be disproportionate, given the state's vote to abolish the death penalty. In any case, they would likely remain in prison

for the rest of their lives.
(END)

WORLD PRESS REVIEW March 2011

This review provides a glimpse of developments related to death penalty as reported by media around the world, in a chronological order from the end of March to the beginning of the month.

TURKEY: PM SAYS GOV'T NOT CONTEMPLATING RETURN OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

March 31, 2011: Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has said the return of capital punishment is “not on the government’s agenda.” Turkey abolished the death penalty in 2002 as part of its EU membership efforts. The debates over whether or not the death sentence must return has risen again in the aftermath of the brutal deaths of three children in Kayseri whose bodies were recently discovered. The Grand Unity Party (BBP) has started collecting signatures for a campaign demanding the return of capital punishment. The mystery surrounding the

disappearance of the three children in 2009, who were visiting neighbors to collect candy as part of the tradition of Eid al-Fitr, the religious festival that marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan, was finally solved over the weekend.

The key suspect in the missing Kayseri children case, Uğur Veli Gülişik, was arrested and taken to Kayseri Prison after he confessed to brutally killing the three youngsters. Gülişik also confessed to raping one of the children, which has led to further public outrage. Speaking at a ceremony in Ankara yesterday, Erdoğan said capital punishment has recently been discussed but that it is not on their agenda. (Source: todayszaman.com)

SRI LANKA: THREE ARMY MEN SENTENCED TO DEATH

March 30, 2011: In Sri Lanka, Colombo High Court judge Jayatilake sentenced three soldiers to death for the abduction, rape and murder. Gamini Saman Uyanage, A. P. Sarathchandra and D. Gamage Kithsiri allegedly murdered Valaudan Pillai Rajini in Kondavil, Jaffna, on or around October 30, 1996. Uyanage and Kithsiri were also indicted for her rape. (Source: Daily Mirror)

DANISH COMPANY REJECTS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT BUT WON'T STOP US EXECUTION DRUG

March 30, 2011: A Danish company that unwittingly has become a key supplier of an execution drug in the U.S. says it's not going to withdraw or restrict it, even though it objects to the chemical being "misused" for capital punishment.

CEO Ulf Wiinberg told AP on Wednesday that Lundbeck A/S is doing "all we can" to dissuade U.S. states from using pentobarbital for lethal injections, but won't pull it from the U.S. market.

He said Lundbeck also decided against rewriting U.S. distribution contracts to prevent the drug from being sold to prisons. Wiinberg says "we don't believe it will work and we will not do it."

Several U.S. states including Texas have switched to pentobarbital for lethal injections to replace another chemical that's no longer readily available.

(Source: Associated Press)

CHINA: THREE FILIPINOS EXECUTED FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING

March 30, 2011: Three Filipinos were executed in China, according to Vice President Jejomar Binay.

Ramon Credo, 42, Elizabeth Batain, 38, and Sally Villanueva, 32, were executed by lethal injection in Xiamen. They were

arrested separately in 2008 carrying packages containing at least 4 kilograms of heroin and were convicted in 2009.

They were allowed to see their families before their executions. They were the first Filipinos to be executed in China for drug trafficking, Philippine officials said.

(Sources: Global Nation)

JAPAN: DEATH SENTENCES FINALISED FOR 3 MEN

March 30, 2011: The death sentences for Masato Kobayashi, 36, Atsushi Okura, 35, and Masayoshi Haga, 35, for killing four people over an 11-day period from Sept. 28, 1994, in Osaka, Aichi and Gifu prefectures, were finalised by Justice Ryuko Sakurai of the Supreme Court.

Kobayashi was sentenced to death by both the Nagoya District Court and the Nagoya High Court. The high court sentenced Okura and Haga to death, after the district court had sentenced them to life imprisonment. On March 10, the Supreme Court rejected appeals by the three against the death sentences. (Source: Kyodo)

ARIZONA (USA): INMATE EXECUTED AMID QUESTIONS OVER DRUG

March 29, 2011: Eric John King, 47, black, was executed in Arizona despite

last-minute arguments by his attorneys who raised questions over one of the lethal injection drugs. Eric John King's death at the state prison in Florence was one of the last expected to use a three-drug lethal injection method.

The Arizona Supreme Court declined to stay King's execution Monday after Burke argued that the state should wait until it enacts its new lethal injection protocol. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to intervene. Ryan announced Friday that Arizona will switch to using just one drug in an effort to allay any "perceived concerns" that sodium thiopental is ineffective, but only after the scheduled executions of King and Daniel Wayne Cook on April 5. Defense attorney Michael Burke had argued that the Department of Corrections may have engaged in fraud when it imported the sedative from Great Britain by listing it on forms as being for "animals (food processing)," not humans. The state said the mislabeling resulted from a clerical error. King was convicted of fatally shooting security guard Richard Butts and clerk Ron Barman at a Phoenix convenience store on Dec. 27, 1989. King becomes the 1st condemned inmate to be put to death this year in Arizona and the 25th overall since the state resumed capital punishment in

1992. King becomes the 10th condemned inmate to be put to death this year in the USA and the 1244th overall since the nation resumed executions on January 17, 1977. (Source: Associated Press)

KUWAIT CONDEMNS THREE TO DEATH IN IRAN SPY RING

March 29, 2011: Two Iranians and a Kuwaiti national, all serving in Kuwait's army, were sentenced to death for belonging to an Iranian spy ring, a judiciary source said. The defendants were accused of spying for neighbouring Iran and of passing on information on the Kuwaiti and US military to Iran. The men were arrested in May 2010. The criminal court's verdict can be appealed up to the supreme court. Iran has strongly rejected the charges of spying for its benefit, insisting the accusations were "absolutely false." (Source: France24.com)

TAJIKISTAN: MAJORITY OF POPULATION AGAINST DEATH PENALTY

March 29, 2011: According to the findings of survey conducted by the Nota Bene public association, the majority of Tajikistan's population is against the death penalty.

More than 2,000 people from all regions of the country were surveyed and 61.18% are for abolition of capital punishment, survey team head Sergey Romanov said. This contradicted claims by officials that the population is not yet ready for full abolition. (Source: Times of Central Asia)

KAZAKHSTAN: TOWARDS DEFINITIVE ABOLITION

March 28, 2011: Kazakhstan took another step towards the abolition of the death penalty. The Presidential Commission for Human Rights in Astana asked the government to abolish capital punishment, press agency Interfax reported.

Commission head Tastemir Abishev, in announcing the request for abolition, reminded that Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbaiev imposed an unlimited moratorium on the death penalty from 2003 onwards and that Astana is an active member of the International Commission for the Abolition of the Death Penalty. Since 2007, after a constitutional modification, the death penalty in Kazakhstan is only allowed for those who commit terrorist attacks that cause death and for serious war crimes. (Source: TMNews)

U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS BODY APPROVES INVESTIGATOR ON IRAN

March 24, 2011: The U.N. Human Rights Council established a special investigator on Iran, a move spearheaded by Washington that will subject Tehran's record to U.N. scrutiny for the first time in nearly a decade.

Activists welcomed the move as historic, underlining the need for a focused investigation into widespread allegations of abuse, including arrests of political opponents and torture.

The 47-member forum, overcoming Iran's objections to a resolution brought by Sweden and the United States, approved it by 22 votes in favor, 7 against and 14 abstentions.

This is the first special rapporteur on a specific country that the U.N. Human Rights Council has set up since its creation nearly five years ago.

Britain, France and the United States were among those approving, joined by Brazil for the first time in years. China and Russia were among those rejecting the text.

The Human Rights Council voiced concern at Iran's crackdown on opposition figures and increased use of the death penalty, and called on the Islamic Republic to cooperate with the U.N. envoy to be named to the independent post.

U.N. officials and diplomats say Iran has not allowed U.N. human rights experts to visit since 2005, when hard-liner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected president, defeating the relatively moderate Mohammad Khatami. Even if the new rapporteur is not allowed into Iran, he would still be expected to contact the government frequently about allegations and produce an annual report incorporating testimony from activists and alleged victims of abuse.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said this month Iran had intensified its crackdown on opponents and executions of drug traffickers, political prisoners and juvenile criminals. In a report, he also cited cases of amputations, floggings and the continued sentencing of men and women to death by stoning for alleged adultery.

The now defunct U.N. Human Rights Commission had special rapporteurs on Iran from 1984 to 2002. (Sources: Reuters)

CHINA APPROVES DEATH SENTENCE FOR 7 IN XINJIANG

March 23, 2011: Seven people allegedly involved in plotting terrorist activities have been sentenced to death for robbery and murder in China's far

western region of Xinjiang, a state-run news website said.

China's Supreme People's Court recently approved the death penalty meted out to seven people by a court in the Silk Road city of Kashgar in Xinjiang's west, the Tianshan website said.

It was unclear whether the seven are Uighurs, historically Xinjiang's majority ethnic group, many of whom resent heavy-handed Chinese rule.

The report says the seven sentenced to death are among a dozen people who met and raised funds between June 2008 and October 2010 to carry out "violent, terrorist" activities. It did not elaborate.

The robberies and murders were committed on three occasions last year, the report said. On Aug. 7, Aimaiti Tuheti and Yiming Dawuti and others killed a security guard at a pedestrian mall while trying to steal, it said. On Oct. 12, Nuermaimaiti Aobulikasimu and 11 others broke into a house, bound and killed the couple living in it and seized their belongings.

Finally, on Nov. 11, Aobulikasimu and others charged into the homes of two brothers, robbed them and killed six people, the report said. It did not explain who the victims were or why they were targeted.

The report did not say when the executions would be carried out.

Three others were sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve, the report said. Such sentences are usually commuted to life imprisonment.

(Source: AP)

VIETNAM: COURT GIVES NIGERIAN DEATH SENTENCE FOR DRUG SMUGGLING

March 23, 2011: A court in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, has sentenced a Nigerian man to death for drug smuggling, state media reported.

Michael Ikenna Nduanya, 34, and his Vietnamese wife, Nguyen Thi Hai Anh, 27, were caught 'illegally transporting drugs,' Cong An newspaper reported. He is the first foreigner to receive the death penalty this year, according to state media reports.

Nduanya was charged with taking part in a trafficking ring that transported heroin from India, through Cambodia and Vietnam to China.

In December 2009, his wife Anh was caught with 1 kilogram of heroin in her handbag on a bus from Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi.

The pair admitted smuggling the drugs four times, for 1,000 dollars each time. Anh, who gave birth in January while awaiting trial in custody, received a life sentence for her part in the crime. News reports said she had been instructed to

carry the drugs.

Under Vietnamese law, the death sentence cannot be applied to pregnant women or women with children under the age of three at the time of crime or the trial. (Source: DPA)

MALDIVES: MP WITHDRAWS DEATH PENALTY AMENDMENT

March 21, 2011: The Maldivian MP, who proposed an amendment to the Clemency Act requiring a death penalty issued by the Supreme Court of the Maldives to be executed, has withdrawn the amendment.

The amendment, proposed by Hoarafushi MP Rasheed, who represents the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), stipulates that despite the Act stating otherwise, a death penalty issued by the Supreme Court- or if the Supreme Court upholds a death penalty issued by a lower court or the Higher Court-should be executed. After three sittings of debate exchanged, both in favour and against, over the bill, Rasheed announced his decision in the opportunity offered to say his last words about the amendment. He, however, did not reveal the reasons behind his decision. Before his announcement, Rasheed also repeatedly spoke in favour of the amendment saying that the death

penalty should be executed.

Rasheed stressed that the bill would be re-submitted after Parliament endorses the Evidence Law and the Justice System Bill. (Source: HNS)

SOMALIA: GALMUDUG COURT CARRIES OUT DEATH PENALTY

March 21, 2011: A court in the Galmudug administration of Southern Galkayo, Somalia, carried out a death penalty sentence on a suspect that was accused of murdering a local businessman in the coastal town of Hobyo.

The suspect, whose name was Dahir Mohamed, was reported to have killed a businessman identified as Mohamed Abdi Jama on February 20 this year. Judge Shiekh Ali Mohamed of Galmudug district court said that the court found the accused guilty after witnesses and enough evidences were produced. The judge said the family of the businessman the suspect was accused of killing could not agree any ruling other than death penalty.

This is the first death penalty that has been carried out by a court of the Galmudug administration. (Source: Sunatimes)

MAURITANIA: FOUR MAURITANIANS SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR ATTACK AGAINST ARMY

March 20, 2011: Four Mauritanian Islamists who were convicted of terrorism were sentenced to death by the criminal court in Nouakchott, PANA learnt from judicial sources.

Abderrahmane Ould Arde, Mohamed Ould Abdou, Mohamed Ould, and Mohamed Ould Ahmed Chbih, also known as Abu Khaled Ould Mouslim, were convicted for their involvement in the 14 September 2008 terrorist attack against the Mauritanian army position in the town of Tourine, near Zouerate, located 600 km north of Nouakchott.

Eleven Mauritanian soldiers and a civilian guide were killed in the attack. It was the fifth death sentence passed on terrorists within a week in Mauritania.

Though the death penalty has not been abolished in Mauritania, no one has been executed in the country since December 1987. (Source: Pana)

IRAN TO EXPEDITE EXECUTION SENTENCES

March 16, 2011: Radio Zamaneh reported the head of Iran's Supreme Court had announced that confirmed execution sentences issued by the penal court would be processed by the

Supreme Court in less than 10 days. "According to an order issued by the head of the judiciary, the Supreme Court is obligated to expedite the files of evil individuals and criminals that have disrupted the security and peace of the people," Ayatollah Ahmad Mohseni Gorkani said.

He added: "Processing these files after a few months, does not produce any effect in society, and the sentence can only be effective when it is processed with speed."

He claimed the process can easily be expedited and "only one or a few hours will be given for the defence of these criminals because the crimes of dangerous offenders are very clear."

Earlier, the head of the Iranian judiciary, Ayatollah Amoli Larijani, had said that the judiciary will expedite the files of "dangerous offenders." (Sources: radiozamaneh.com)

PAKISTAN DEATH ROW PRISONERS 'LANGUISH IN JAIL'

March 15, 2011: More than 8,000 prisoners sentenced to death by Pakistani courts over the past 20 years still languish in jail, the Asian Human Rights Commission has said.

The vast majority are appealing against their sentences - those condemned include foreigners, females and young

and old people.

Most prisoners awaiting the death sentence are incarcerated in the jails of Punjab province.

In 2005 the number of death sentence prisoners was 5,447 but that total has now risen - while the capacity of the prisons has not been increased to hold them in better conditions.

Prisoner rights campaigner Sarim Burney is quoted in the report as saying that many inmates become hardened in jail and "get involved in heinous activities due to the environment in which they are forced to live".

The report says that few death sentences have actually been carried out because of the lengthy appeals process combined with the inefficient way in which the judicial system in the country is run.

One prisoner is reported to have spent more than 18 years in jail awaiting the decision of an appeal.

"To be executed after that is a mockery of justice," Mr Burney said. "He has already served a life sentence." (Sources: BBC)

SAUDI ARABIA: PHILANTHROPIST PAYS BLOOD MONEY, FOUR INDIANS ON DEATH ROW PARDONED

March 15, 2011: An Indian father pardoned four Indian expatriates who

were found guilty of murdering his son in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in early 2008. Abdul Kader, the father, received SR680,000 in blood money from the four expatriates who murdered his 24-year-old son, Mohammed Ashraff, in an altercation in Riyadh's Aziziyah district. The dead man was from the port city of Mangalore in the southern state of Karnataka. His killers were all from the south Indian state of Kerala. The blood money was paid by Gulf-based Indian businessman Padmashri C K Menon through a Saudi friend in Alkhobar, Mohammed bin Hamim. Bin Hamim said Menon, a philanthropist, instructed him to pay the blood money on his behalf in sympathy for the convicts' families. The four Indians who carried out the killing were Mohammed Fazaludeen, Kunnath Mustaffa, Mohammed Mustaffa and Sakir Hussein. Shihab Kotukad, an Indian social worker who was dealing with the case, said Menon agreed to pay the blood money after intervention by former Kerala Chief Minister Omman Chandi. The men were convicted of murder in late 2008, six months after the killing. (Sources: Arab News)

TAIWAN: DOCTORS TRANSPLANT ORGANS TAKEN FROM EXECUTED PRISONERS

March 5, 2011: Doctors at southern Taiwan's Kaohsiung Chang Gung Memorial Hospital (KCGMH) conducted liver transplant surgeries after receiving the bodies of two inmates executed, local media reported.

A total of five death-row inmates were executed in Taipei, central Taichung and southern Kaohsiung respectively around 6:30 p.m. yesterday after Minister of Justice Tseng Yung-fu signed their execution decrees earlier in the day.

Three of those executed, Guang Chung-yen, Wang Kuo-hua and Chuang Tien-chu, signed pledges to donate their organs before their executions.

The bodies of Wang and Chuang, who were executed at the Kaohsiung Second Prison, were sent to KCGMH to have their organs removed for transplant to suitable patients, according to the Chinese-language United Evening News report.

It took less than 15 minutes for the ambulance to send the bodies of Wang and Chuang to Kaohsiung's hospital where more than 40 medical staff had been waiting to conduct emergency surgeries.

At 6:45 a.m. yesterday, the medical team led by Chen Chao-long, head of the KCGMH and a well-known expert in

liver transplant, conducted the first liver surgery. Only five hours later, Chen's team conducted another successful transplant.

The team barely slept for nearly 24 hours in order to conduct the two surgeries, the report said.

Wen-chih, a staff in the hospital was quoted as saying that from the two inmates the medical team removed two hearts, two livers, two pancreases, four kidneys and four corneas, as well as numerous bones and blood vessels. The hearts and livers were immediately sent to two hospitals in Taipei City via helicopters for transplant, while the bones and blood vessels were put into storage at a local organ bank, Wang said.

Meanwhile, Guang, who was put to death in Taipei, was sent to the Far Eastern Memorial Hospital in New Taipei City for transplant surgery, where a surgical team removed his heart, kidneys, liver and pancreases at around 9:30 p.m. yesterday night.

The removed organs were expected to help at least six patients who were in desperate need, according to the hospital.

A medical chief of the hospital responsible for organ transplants, surnamed Hung, said regulations prevented them from revealing the origin of organs to patients. He also

noted that there are still 7,108 patients in Taiwan suffering through the tedious and painstaking wait for an organ transplant. (Source: China Post)

SAUDI ARABIA: DAD'S PARDON SAVES THREE CONVICTS FROM GALLOWS

March 6, 2011: A Saudi appeal court reversed a death sentence against three teen agers found guilty of causing the death of a little boy who they had tried to rape after his father agreed to pardon them in return for blood money. In a report from the western Red Sea port of Jeddah, Okaz newspaper said the three would be saved and freed only after their relatives paid all the diya (blood money) set by the court at SR2.8 million (\$755,000).

But the paper quoted relatives of the three convicts, aged 15-18 years, that they would not be able to secure that sum given their poor financial resources, adding that they count on benevolent people in the Gulf Kingdom to save their sons.

The three defendants, a Saudi, Yemeni and a Sudanese, snatched the boy near his house seven years ago and took him to a roof of a building to rape him. But he resisted and tried to escape, plunging to his death from the top.

But the victim's father, a Yemeni, had told court that he was convinced the

three threw his son off the roof after he resisted their rape attempt. A court in Jeddah earlier sentenced the three to death by beheading but the appeal court this week reversed the verdict after strenuous mediation efforts by friends and relatives persuaded the victim's father to accept diya. (Sources: Emirates247.com)

News from International NGOs - March 2011

PRI LAUNCHES PROJECT AGAINST THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS AND TB IN KAZAKHSTAN'S WOMEN'S PRISONS

KARAGANDY, 15 March 2011 – Penal Reform International with the financial support of the European Union is launching a project for women's prisons in Kazakhstan: "A model programme against the spread of HIV/AIDS and TB in women prisons".

The aim of the project is to enhance the system of prevention, detection, cure and care of HIV/AIDS and TB among women prisoners and prison staff in Karaganda and Eastern Kazakhstan

oblasts, to inform women prisoners and prison staff about HIV/AIDS and TB transmission; and to provide expert support for the process of the transition of medical services from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Health.

The programme will include a number of training sessions, research into the current situation regarding HIV/AIDS and TB in women's prisons, establishing a patient school for women prisoners, debates on the problem of HIV/AIDS in prisons, development of the operational capacities of the local authorities, and the involvement of international and national experts in enhancing the system of medical services in women's prisons.

"Projects aimed at solving the medical problems in women's prisons are topical in the light of the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders ('Bangkok Rules'), adopted recently by UN General Assembly and devoted to introducing new standards on women prisoners' incarceration. In Kazakhstan today, 3,659 women are incarcerated in prisons, 563 women are in pre-trial detention centres, 27 of them are pregnant, and 711 have children," reported Saule

Mektepbayeva, the Regional Director of PRI in Central Asia.

According to Professor Nadezhda Kozachenkor, the director of “Credo” NGO: “By organizing the school of patients and training within the project we want to increase the responsible treatment of health by women prisoners”.

The project is realized by PRI in Central Asia and “Credo” NGO in cooperation with Departments of Criminal-Executive System of Eastern-Kazakhstan and Karaganda oblasts. The project's duration is 24 months, and the EU has allocated Euro 228 052 for its implementation.

Media are invited to the press-conference on 16 March 2011 at 11.30, to take place at the following address: Karaganda city, Pospelov str., 17, the conference hall of Department of Criminal-Executive System of Karaganda oblast.

For additional information please contact Barykbayeva Indira, PRI project coordinator via tel/fax: +7 7172 787 672, 787 673 or email:

ibarykbayeva@penalreform.org.

This project is funded by the European Union
Delegation of the European Union to

the Republic of Kazakhstan
62, Kosmonavtov str.
Astana 010000

Tel: (7172) 97-10-40

Fax: (7172) 97-95-63

PRI Briefings

Penal Reform Briefing No.1: Alternatives to the Death Penalty

<http://www.penalreform.org/publications/penal-reform-briefing-no1-alternatives-death-penalty-0>

Penal Reform Briefing No.2: Health in Prisons

<http://www.penalreform.org/publications/penal-reform-briefing-no2-health-prisons-0>

Penal Reform Briefing No.3: Women in Prison

<http://www.penalreform.org/publications/penal-reform-briefing-no3-women-prison-0>

Briefing on the UN rules for the treatment of women prisoners and non-custodial measures for women offenders (‘Bangkok rules’)

<http://www.penalreform.org/publications/pri-briefing-bangkok-rules-standards-minimum-rules-treatment-female-prisoners>

DEATH PENALTY IN 2010: EXECUTING COUNTRIES LEFT ISOLATED AFTER DECADE OF PROGRESS

28 March 2011

Countries which continue to use the death penalty are being left increasingly isolated following a decade of progress towards abolition, Amnesty International has said today in its new report *Death Sentences and Executions in 2010*.

A total of 31 countries abolished the death penalty in law or in practice during the last 10 years but China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the USA and Yemen remain amongst the most frequent executioners, some in direct contradiction of international human rights law.

The total number of executions officially recorded by Amnesty International in 2010 went down from at least 714 people in 2009 to at least 527 in 2010, excluding China.

China is believed to have executed thousands in 2010 but continues to maintain its secrecy over its use of the death penalty.

“The minority of states that continue to

systematically use the death penalty were responsible for thousands of executions in 2010, defying the global anti-death penalty trend,” said Salil Shetty, Amnesty International’s Secretary General.

“While executions may be on the decline, a number of countries continue to pass death sentences for drug-related offences, economic crimes, sexual relations between consenting adults and blasphemy, violating international human rights law forbidding the use of the death penalty except for the most serious crimes,” said Salil Shetty.

Two regions are responsible for most executions worldwide: Asia and the Middle East.

China used the death penalty in 2010 against thousands of people for a wide range of crimes that include non-violent offences and after proceedings that did not meet international fair trial standards.

A significant proportion of the executions or death sentences recorded in 2010 in China, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Laos, Libya, Malaysia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Yemen were for drug-related offences.

Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates ignored international prohibitions in 2010 and imposed death sentences on individuals that were below 18 years of age when the crimes were committed.

Amnesty International's report highlights a number of setbacks during 2010 when six other countries and territories carried out executions after a hiatus and one country expanded the scope of the death penalty.

"In spite of some set backs, developments in 2010 brought us closer to global abolition. The President of Mongolia announced a moratorium on the death penalty, an important first step as capital punishment is still classified as state secret. For the third time and with more support than ever before, the UN General Assembly called for a global moratorium on executions" said Salil Shetty.

Since 2003, less than half of retentionist countries have carried out executions. Less than a third were known to have executed prisoners every year over the last four years.

"Any country that continues to execute is flying in the face of the fact that both human rights law and UN human rights

bodies consistently hold that abolition should be the objective."

"A world free of the death penalty is not only possible, it is inevitable," said Salil Shetty. "The question is how long will it take?"

REGIONAL SUMMARIES

Americas

In the USA, the only country in the Americas to carry out executions, at least 110 death sentences were imposed during 2010 but this represents only about a third of the number handed down in the mid-1990s. And in March 2011, Illinois became the 16th state to abolish the death penalty.

Asia-Pacific

In 2010 Amnesty International was not able to confirm comprehensive figures on the use of the death penalty for China, Malaysia, North Korea, Singapore and Viet Nam although executions were known to have been carried out in all these countries. Available information from five other countries in the region confirmed at least 82 executions were carried out in Asia.

Eleven countries imposed death sentences but continued not to carry out executions in 2010: Afghanistan, Brunei Darussalam, India, Indonesia,

Laos, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The Pacific Islands remained free from death sentences and executions. In January 2010 the President of Mongolia announced a moratorium on executions with a view to abolition of the death penalty.

Europe and Central Asia

After a year's hiatus in 2009 when for the first time no executions were recorded in Europe and the former Soviet Union, in March 2010 the Belarusian authorities carried out two executions. Three new death sentences were imposed in Belarus in 2010.

Middle East and North Africa

Fewer death sentences and executions were recorded in total in the Middle East and North Africa in 2010 than in 2009. However, where the death penalty was imposed it was frequently used after unfair trials and for offences, such as drug-trafficking or adultery, which are not recognized as the "most serious crimes" and therefore in violation of international law. The authorities of Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco/Western Sahara, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates imposed death sentences but continued to refrain from carrying out executions.

The Iranian authorities acknowledged the execution of 252 people, including five women and one juvenile offender in 2010. Amnesty International received credible reports of more than 300 other executions which were not officially acknowledged, mostly in Vakilabad Prison, Mashhad. Most were of people convicted of alleged drugs offences. Fourteen people were publicly executed. Death sentences continued to be imposed in large numbers.

Sub-Saharan Africa

In 2010 one more African country, Gabon, abolished the death penalty, bringing the number of abolitionist countries among African Union members to 16.

Four countries were known to have executed in sub-Saharan Africa in 2010: Botswana (1), Equatorial Guinea (4), Somalia (at least 8) and Sudan (at least 6).

DEATHS IN IRANIAN PRISON MUST BE INVESTIGATED

17 March 2011

Amnesty International has called for an investigation into reports that up to 14 people were killed in a disturbance in a jail near Tehran this week.

The incident at the overcrowded Qezel Hesar prison in Karaj occurred on Tuesday night when clashes broke out involving prisoners and prison guards. The Prisons Chief said that a judicial investigation has been launched.

"Such a high death toll is extremely worrying. Prison officials have a responsibility to maintain order and to protect the lives of prisoners, but must exercise restraint," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme.

"A prompt inquiry into these deaths is essential but it must be independent and transparent, as international human rights standards require, such as those set out in the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and the Body of Principles for the protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment.

"Unfortunately the Iranian Judiciary has routinely failed to carry out such investigations, so we are once again calling on the international community to use the current session of the UN Human Rights Council to create a Special Rapporteur to monitor and report on human rights in the Iran."

Prison authorities said the riot was sparked by death row prisoners and drug-trafficking and possession offenders committing arson and other destructive acts in an attempt to escape, as well as attacking prison guards.

However, human rights activist groups told Amnesty International the prisoners were protesting at poor conditions and attempts to transfer some of the inmates for execution.

One activist based abroad said he had been in contact with a prisoner from inside Section 2 of prison until the early hours of Wednesday, when the phone lines were cut.

"The prisoners took over Sections 2 and 3 of the prison," the activist told Amnesty International.

"I was told that armed guards had stationed themselves on the roof of the prison and outside the doors to the section and the prisoners set fire to bedding to try to stop the guards from entering. The prisoner told me that the guards were shooting at everyone."

There are reports that at least six people died from gunshot wounds and over 100 may have been injured, with

some dying in - or on the way to - medical centres.

Iranian State Television reportedly said on Wednesday that 14 people had died, including at least nine prisoners, and 33 had been injured. Prison guards may have also been among the fatalities.

"We know that the Iranian authorities are on a killing spree at the moment, having executed well over 100 people – mainly alleged drugs offenders - since the start of the year. This is yet one more reason why they should immediately order a moratorium on all executions," added Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

ILLINOIS ABOLISHES THE DEATH PENALTY

10 March 2011

Amnesty International has welcomed the decision by Governor Pat Quinn of Illinois to sign into law a bill abolishing the death penalty. He also commuted the death sentences of the 15 men on death row in the state.

Illinois will become the 16th state in the USA to ban capital punishment when the law signed by Governor Quinn yesterday comes into effect on 1 July.

It will be the third state to enact abolitionist legislation in the past two years after New Jersey and New Mexico.

The bill was approved by the Illinois legislature in January.

"Abolition in Illinois is the latest sign that the USA is gradually turning away from a punishment whose costs and risks the country has begun to recognize as unacceptable" said Rob Freer of Amnesty International.

"In making this bill law Governor Quinn has set an example to other states that still retain the death penalty. This is a cruel punishment – incompatible with human dignity – that should have no place in a modern criminal justice system."

Illinois has executed 12 people since judicial killing resumed in the USA in 1977. During the same period, 20 people have been released from the state's death row, the second highest number of such exonerations among the USA's death penalty states.

Illinois has not carried out an execution since 1999. In 2000 then-Governor George Ryan declared a moratorium on executions after concluding that the

capital justice system was fundamentally flawed.

In 2003, he pardoned four death row inmates whom he concluded were innocent, and commuted the death sentences of 167 others.

Amnesty International said it agrees with Governor Quinn's assessment that Illinois is taking an important step forward in its history as it "joins the 15 other states and many nations of the world that have abolished the death penalty."

Two-thirds of countries no longer use the death penalty, and death sentences in the USA have plunged in the last decade to their lowest levels since the country resumed judicial killing in 1977 – at least partially thought to be due to public and political awareness of the number of wrongful convictions that have been discovered in capital cases.

The 15 other abolitionist states in the USA are: Alaska, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. The District of Columbia is also abolitionist. The remaining 34 states have the death

penalty, as does the federal government and the US military.

LATEST EXECUTIONS: A HUGE STEP BACK FOR JUSTICE IN TAIWAN

14 March 2011

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its member organization, Taiwan Association for Human Rights (TAHR) deplore the hasty execution of five prisoners on March 4, 2011. The families of the prisoners were notified only after the executions. These executions contradict previous statements by the authorities favoring abolition and isolate Taiwan in the worldwide movement towards a universal moratorium.

The executed inmates were: Chong De-shu, Kuan Chung-yen, Wang Chih-huang, Wang Kuo-hua, and Chuang Tien-chu. This was the second batch of executions in less than a year. Another four prisoners were executed in April 2010. There are now 40 inmates currently on death row in Taiwan. The Ministry of Justice has made assurances in the past that it would only carry out executions with "extreme care" to ensure that prisoners' rights are protected, but last year it unilaterally changed prison conditions for death row inmates to restrict their letter-writing

and family visitation rights.

FIDH and TAHR recall that at the end of January, President Ma Ying-jeou apologized to the family of Mr. Chiang Kuo-ching, the soldier who was found to have been wrongfully executed 14 years ago for the rape and murder of a young girl. The President also requested the Ministry of National Defense to clear Chiang's name and assist his family in obtaining compensation. The hope that this gesture represents political commitment towards abolition has now been completely dashed.

In March 2010, the Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty (TAEDP) filed petitions on behalf of inmates on death row to the president for pardon. There has yet to be a formal response from the President's Office when the March 4 executions were carried out. Taiwan has signed and ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and is obliged to guarantee the rights enshrined in the Covenant, including death row inmates' "right to seek pardon or commutation of the sentence" (article 6.4). The absence of a law regulating and guaranteeing the rights for death row inmates to seek pardon undermines such rights.

"By carrying out these executions," said

Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President, "Taiwan violates international and national law." "Taiwan should join the growing international momentum towards universal abolition, as confirmed by the last resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) calling for a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty, adopted by 109 States on 21 December 2010. Today, more than two thirds of the countries in the world have abolished the death penalty in law or practice," added Ms. Belhassen.

Chairperson of Taiwan Association for Human Rights, Lin Chia Fan, also indicated that "it is estimated by the Quinquennial Report of the UN Secretary General on capital punishment that the universal abolition of the death penalty could be achieved soonest in 2015. Taiwan is really in the last batch of the game." "After three UNGA resolutions calling for a global moratorium," Mr. Lin added, "it is absurd for the government to assert that carrying more executions is not against the goal towards abolition."

THE FUTURE OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE UNITED STATES

By Richard Fielding on 28 March 2011

Governor Pat Quinn's signing abolition into law last week in Illinois has reopened the debate on the death penalty throughout the country. Several states are currently considering abolition.

The debate over the death penalty has a long history in the United States, and it is a highly contentious and emotional issue.

Since its national abolition in 1972 and its reinstatement four years later, the number of executions at first increased up until the late 1990s, only to fall off again considerably in the following decade.

In fact, a nationwide poll in 2010 revealed that over two thirds of American voters would not hold a vote to abolish the death penalty against their local or national representative.

If the tide is turning against **the death penalty in the United States**, it is probably due to a combination of several factors, among them an increasing public awareness about the death penalty, in terms of flaws and of cost, and a feeling that other forms of punishment are perhaps preferable.

The recent fiasco concerning the

possibly illegal importation of lethal injection drugs has also stoked public misgivings over the death penalty in general.

Yet the death penalty issue in the US must be considered on a state-by-state basis, as most legislation concerning capital punishment is enacted at that level.

Kansas: An abolition bill was emotionally debated in the state senate in 2010 and finished in a 20-20 deadlock. A new bill is currently on the table in the state House of Representatives. The state has not held an execution since 1976, and the abolition movement, led by the Kansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty, has broad support among both political parties.

New Hampshire: Although New Hampshire's congress passed a bill to abolish the death penalty in 2000, it was vetoed by the governor. The current governor has vowed to veto any abolition legislation, although the state currently has no one on death row, and does not have any execution facilities.

Connecticut: Although a recent poll showed that 67% of voters in Connecticut support the death penalty,

a bill will shortly be open for debate and seems to have a good chance of passing. Responding to the poll, Ben Jones, executive director of the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty, said: "In these kinds of polls, when people are given the option of life without parole, support for capital punishment drops dramatically."

Montana: Despite a sustained campaign by the Montana Abolition Coalition, the most recent of several recent abolition bills failed on March 19th, in a vote of 7-13.

Maryland: After narrowly failing two years ago, abolitionists have relaunched their campaign in 2011 with what seems to be fairly strong support from lawmakers. In addition, the governor has said he would sign abolition legislation were it to pass.

Nebraska: Last week, the state's Judiciary Committee voted to open an abolition bill for debate, although the debate may not be taken up until next year. Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty has been active in launching and gaining support for the new bill.

Texas: Although Texas has been by far the most prolific user of the death penalty since its reinstatement in 1976,

with over 400 executions, a bill for abolition has been launched and will hear testimony next week. Executive director of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, Kristin Houlé, said: "We urge all elected officials to take a good hard look at the death penalty system and ask whether this is a good use of tax payers' dollars when there are alternative ways to protect society and punish those who are truly guilty."

Ohio: Although the Ohio governor is a supporter of the death penalty, there is increasingly broad support for an abolition bill currently being debated in the House of Representatives. Ohioans to Stop Executions and others are leading the campaign to support the new bill.



Read the latest information about worldwide
efforts to abolish the death penalty!

<http://www.ipsnews.net/deathpenaltyabolition>



These pages include news coverage which is part of a project funded by the European Union

The contents of this news coverage, including any funded by the European Union, are the sole responsibility of IPS and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

www.ipsnews.net