



International Commission
against the Death Penalty

President

Navanethem (Navi) Pillay

Vice Presidents

Ruth Dreifuss

Ibrahim Najjar

Members

Michelle Bachelet

Marc Bossuyt

Helen Clark

Marzuki Darusman

Michèle Duvivier Pierre-Louis

Tsakhia Elbegdorj

Hanne Sophie Greve

Sylvie Kayitesi

Enda Kenny

Ioanna Kuçuradi

Barbara Lochbihler

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

Dannel Malloy

Marta Santos Pais

Ivan Simonovic

Horacio Verbitsky

Honorary Members

Giuliano Amato

Louise Arbour

Mohammed Bedjaoui

Martin Joseph O'Malley

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero

Marta Vilardell

Founding Members

Rodolfo Mattarollo
(1939-2014)

Asma Jilani Jahangir
(1952-2018)

Bill Richardson
(1947-2023)

Robert Badinter
(1928-2024)

Federico Mayor Zaragoza
(1934-2024)

Secretariat

Pl. Marqués de Salamanca 8

28006 Madrid, Spain

+00 34 91 3799458

info@icomdp.org



North-South Prize
of the Council of Europe

SARIA PREMIO

René Cassin

Madrid, 29 July 2025

ICDP 13/2025

Statement by the International Commission against the Death Penalty: Alarming escalation of use of the death penalty in Iran including on politically motivated charges

The International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP or Commission) expresses its deepest concern over the escalating use of the death penalty in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which already carries out one of the highest number of executions. The UN Human Rights Office estimates that at least 612 executions were carried out by authorities in the first half of 2025, when the number of executions during the same period in 2024 was estimated at around 297 executions. Minority communities continue to be disproportionately affected by executions.

“The reported worryingly high scale and arbitrary nature of executions in Iran today reflect a systemic assault on life, dignity, and justice and spreading fear,” said ICDP President Navi Pillay. “I join my fellow ICDP Commissioners in expressing our profound concern at the escalation of the number of executions carried out by Iranian authorities, that these executions have, according to credible reports, been carried out following closed or manifestly unfair trials. These reports suggest that torture is rampant, that defendants are denied legal counsel, that confessions are forcibly extracted, and that in many instances, families are not notified of executions, which are conducted in secrecy, limiting opportunities for accountability or public scrutiny. Only a small number of executions are officially acknowledged by authorities. The death penalty has been used increasingly as a tool to intimidate, to control, to silence voices of concern and opposition and is disproportionately used against the most marginalised sections of society at a time of perceived threats including the latest escalation of hostilities against Israel in June.”

On 27 July, reports reaching ICDP suggest that the executions of two men 70-year-old Behrouz Ehsani and 49-year-old Mehdi Hassani were carried out, by hanging, in secret after being sentenced to death on politically motivated, vaguely defined charges of “armed rebellion against the state” (*baghy*), “corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel-arz*) and “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) in relation to alleged affiliation with the banned opposition group, People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI). They were reportedly tortured and subject to prolonged incommunicado detention, denied access to their lawyers for nearly two years before facing a short trial where they were not allowed to speak in their own defence, and their executions were carried out without prior notice, depriving their families of final visits, and despite a pending appeal. Mr. Ehsani and Mr. Hassani had, from inside prison, reportedly protested against the death penalty by going on hunger strike every Tuesday for 18 months as part of the “No to Execution Tuesdays” campaign.

ICDP is also concerned at reports that suggest that tens of people are at risk of execution for politically motivated charges including Swedish-Iranian academic Ahmadreza Djalali, at least three women including women’s rights defender Shairfeh Mohammadi, Kurdish dissident Verisheh Moradi, Kurdish humanitarian worker Pakhshan Azizi, at least nine people in relation to the Woman Life Freedom protests, some seven people under espionage-related charges. ICDP fears increased executions like that of Mr. Ehsani and Mr. Hassani following reports of an emergency bill awaiting final approval that will expand the scope of the death penalty, which has been accompanied by a reported increase in the number of arrests, worrying official orders to speed up trials and executions, especially after the recent hostilities with Israel.



**International Commission
against the Death Penalty**

President

Navanethem (Navi) Pillay

Vice Presidents

Ruth Dreifuss

Ibrahim Najjar

Members

Michelle Bachelet

Marc Bossuyt

Helen Clark

Marzuki Darusman

Michèle Duvivier Pierre-Louis

Tsakhia Elbegdorj

Hanne Sophie Greve

Sylvie Kayitesi

Enda Kenny

Ioanna Kuçuradi

Barbara Lochbihler

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

Dannel Malloy

Marta Santos Pais

Ivan Simonovic

Horacio Verbitsky

Honorary Members

Giuliano Amato

Louise Arbour

Mohammed Bedjaoui

Martin Joseph O'Malley

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero

Marta Vilardell

Founding Members

Rodolfo Mattarollo

(1939-2014)

Asma Jilani Jahangir

(1952-2018)

Bill Richardson

(1947-2023)

Robert Badinter

(1928-2024)

Federico Mayor Zaragoza

(1934-2024)

Secretariat

Pl. Marqués de Salamanca 8

28006 Madrid, Spain

+00 34 91 3799458

info@icomdp.org



North-South Prize
of the Council of Europe

SARIA PREMIO

René Cassin

ICDP expresses concern of Iranian authorities disproportionately using the death penalty against members of ethnic and religious minorities, including the Baluchi and Kurdish populations. Reports suggest that Baluchi people are estimated to account for over 20 percent of executions, despite constituting between 2 to 4 percent of the total population in Iran and there are reported estimates of about a hundred Kurdish people (about one in six executions) having been executed in 2025. Afghan nationals and dual or foreign citizens have also been reportedly executed without due process or consular access.

Moreover, reports reaching ICDP suggest that more than 40 percent of the executions, which under current estimates run into hundreds of people, are carried out on drug-related charges. The death penalty has been shown not to be a deterrent to these offences, especially when one notes the arbitrariness, the secrecy that shrouds the capital punishment system in Iran including the lack of due process, the systemic use of torture and ill-treatment to coerce confessions, the lack of access to legal defence, the disproportionate use of death penalty on minority communities and the trial process where the defendants get very little opportunity to defend themselves.

ICDP calls on Iranian authorities to move away from the death penalty by establishing a moratorium with a view to eventual abolition. The death penalty has no place in today's world as shown by the vast majority of countries that do not carry out executions: at least 113 countries have abolished the death penalty for all crimes and over 140 countries do not carry out executions in law and/or in practice. Iran's authorities should consider joining this international trend to upholding human rights, based on the respect, fulfilment and protection of the fundamental right to life.

Background

The International Commission against the Death Penalty is currently composed of 25 Commissioners of high international standing following highly respected careers in public service and human rights. ICDP's work is supported by a Support Group of 24 Member States who are committed to the abolition of the death penalty and, like the Commissioners, represent all regions of the world. The Commission acts with total independence under the leadership of President Judge Navi Pillay. 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 organizations, governments and nongovernmental organizations 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.