



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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The Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

### **COVID-19: CALLING FOR A WORLDWIDE MORATORIUM ON THE DEATH PENALTY DURING THE PANDEMIC**

“When the whole world is trying hard to save lives from COVID-19, an execution by the state is contradictory and perverse” said Kevin Miguel Rivera Medina, President of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

In a statement released today, ADPAN and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty call on all countries that still use the death penalty to impose a moratorium on death sentences and executions on the ground that fair trials and fair legal representation are impossible to maintain during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“While some countries now sentence people to death by videoconference, as in Nigeria or Singapore, in others the prison restrictions have seriously infringed the rights of those awaiting execution because courts are stalled and law firms are closed. Options to help people whose lives are at risk are decreasing.”

“The current global health crisis has demonstrated how profoundly unfair the system has been on people already weakened by their heavy sentence. A lack of visits to people on death row and the inability for lawyers and judges to work normally are all unfair consequences of an ill-equipped system.” By comparison, those countries that have had the courage during this time to take a step, big or small, towards abolition shows that our world is made better without this archaic, cruel and degrading practice of capital punishment. For example, Cameroon, Kenya, Morocco and Zimbabwe have granted commutations, which also extended to those sentenced to death.

This 10 October, civil society will mobilize to celebrate the 18<sup>th</sup> World Day Against the Death Penalty, which will focus on the right to legal representation and highlight the role of lawyers in protecting those facing the death penalty. A right that is fractured by the health crisis since lawyers are less able to assist their clients and who are also economically weakened.

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