



Statement in Commemoration of the 21st World Day against the Death Penalty

10 October 2023

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) commemorates the 21st World Day against the Death Penalty with the message “An Irreversible Torture”.

2023 marks a significant turning point for the death penalty in the Asia Pacific. In April, Malaysia abolished the mandatory death penalty. This follows the introduction of the ‘probationary’ death penalty in Indonesia and the abolition of the death penalty in Papua New Guinea in January 2022.

While progress is made across the region, staunch retentionist states within the Asia Pacific took the initiative to strengthen their advocacy to support the retention of the death penalty with a new attempt to introduce the ‘sovereignty clause’ into existing resolution on the question of the death penalty at the United Nations. The sovereignty clause is advocated on the false premise that denies the accepted definition of ‘the most serious crimes’ and other principles under international law. The sovereignty clause advocated is merely a façade for the license to kill for these states.

There are no circumstances in which the death penalty can be justified or can be applied without violating human rights. Documented executions and death penalty trials across the region consistently highlight recurring violations of the right to fair trial, prohibition of torture, discrimination against persons with disabilities and gender discrimination.

Prolonged detention on death row has proven to have a significant impact on persons on death row, and it also inflicts significant social and economic harm upon their families and friends. Even when a person is eventually granted a reprisal or clemency, the experience and torture inflicted by the death penalty will continue to haunt them for the remainder of their life.

Criminal justice ought to be centered around remedying harm caused and rehabilitating individuals convicted of criminal offences. The death penalty serves neither purpose. The claimed effect of deterrence has consistently been debunked by academic studies and surveys conducted across Asia-Pacific and around the world. The only proven capability of the death penalty is its capacity to inflict further harm on society without addressing the root causes of serious crimes.

ADPAN and our allies call for the imposition of a global moratorium on executions and for states to adopt policies towards the eventual abolition of the death penalty. The death penalty is an archaic punishment that ought to be consigned to history and should not be a part of Asia-Pacific's roadmap to the future.

— END —

For more information:

Contact Point : Dobby Chew

Email : adpan@adpan.org

Website : <https://adpan.org/>

ADPAN is the peak regional body for organisations committed to the abolition of the death penalty across Asia-Pacific, with members from 20 countries within the region. As such, ADPAN maintains that the death penalty violates the right to life, that it is the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and that the death penalty should be entirely abolished internationally.