



STATEMENT - 15 July 2026

ADPAN Welcomes Cambodia's Decision to Accede to International Anti-Death Penalty Treaty, Preventing its Return

Phnom Penh / Paris — At the 9th World Congress Against the Death Penalty in Paris, Cambodia announced a historic move to permanently lock in its abolitionist status by ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN) strongly welcomes this decision which ensures that capital punishment can never be reintroduced in the country.

One of Only Two Abolitionist Countries in Southeast Asia

Apart from the Philippines, Cambodia is the only other country in the region to have fully abolished the death penalty. The prohibition was formally written into both the 1989 Constitution of the State of Cambodia and subsequently Article 32 of the 1993 Constitution of Cambodia¹. According to the Ministry of Justice, the constitutional ban reflects Cambodia's commitment to the right to life and human dignity.

These principles align with international law and are deeply rooted in the country's tragic history. The injustices and heinous crimes that caused the loss of millions of lives during the Khmer Rouge has influenced the country's commitment to abolition. This stance was also demonstrated during the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), where figures like Kaing Guek Eav (Duch) were sentenced to life imprisonment rather than death.²

Choosing justice over retribution has reinforced Cambodia's rejection of capital punishment—both then and for the future. Furthermore, ADPAN emphasises that in any justice

¹ *Ratification Kit - Cambodia* (no date) *World Coalition Against The Death Penalty*. Available at: <https://worldcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Cambodia-EN-1.pdf> (Accessed: 09 July 2026).

² *Abolition of the death penalty: A growing worldwide trend*. Available at: https://cambodia.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/news/WebDOCs/2012/Joint-OHCHR-UNODC_Op-Ed_on_the_death_penalty_10_Oct.pdf (Accessed: 09 July 2026).

system, the risk of judicial error makes the death penalty inherently dangerous; unlike life imprisonment, an execution is entirely irreversible.

Cambodia's Journey towards Ratification of the ICCPR

Cambodia has demonstrated its commitment to abolishing the death penalty by voting in favor of seven UN General Assembly resolutions for a moratorium since 2007. During its 2014 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the UN Human Rights Council, Cambodia initially accepted recommendations to ratify the Second Optional Protocol, but later noted them, stating they required inter-ministerial review to ensure they aligned with national and regional realities.

During its 2019 and 2024 UPR, however, Cambodia officially accepted the recommendations to ratify the Protocol.³

Our Call to Action

At a time when several Southeast Asian neighbors continue to carry out executions or resist reform, Cambodia can become a leader in the regional abolition of capital punishment. To underline Cambodia's decision to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR and its 36-year streak without the death penalty, we urge the government to:

- swiftly sign, ratify and finalise the formal approval process through the National Assembly and the Senate, and deposit the instrument of ratification with the UN Secretary-General to legally lock in this commitment under international law.
- use its unique standing to advocate for similar death penalty moratoriums and abolitions among its regional neighbors.

For Office Use:

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³ *Abolition of the death penalty: A growing worldwide trend*. Available at: https://cambodia.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/news/WebDOCs/2012/Joint-OHCHR-UNODC_Op-Ed_on_the_death_penalty_10_Oct.pdf (Accessed: 09 July 2026).