

10 October 2020

18th World Day Against the Death Penalty

Access to counsel: A matter of life or death

#nodeathpenalty

In commemoration of the 18th **World Day against the Death Penalty** and the 30th anniversaries of the **UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers** and the **IBA Standards for the Independence of the Legal Profession**, the members of the **World Coalition Against the Death Penalty** and the **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute** take the opportunity to:

- Stress the importance of the right to effective legal representation in capital punishment cases, where the consequences that can arise from the lack thereof can be nothing less than the difference between life and death;
- Recall that the imposition of the death penalty following a trial in violation of due process and fair trial standards would render the sentence arbitrary and in violation of the right to life;
- Emphasize that the independence of the legal profession and access to justice are prerequisites to democracy and the rule of law;
- Recognize the challenges that limit the work of lawyers, such as a lack of adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense; a lack of necessary training for complex proceedings; being confronted with pressure and interference in their work; and deficient legal aid systems;
- Urge all States to protect lawyers from any form of attack, harassment, or pressure, and to fully recognize, uphold and protect their role in upholding human rights, free and democratic societies, and the rule of law;
- Advocate for universal abolition and call on States that have not yet abolished the death penalty to guarantee the right to effective legal representation at all stages of capital cases without distinction of any kind.

Signatories:

The Advocates for Human Rights

Children Education Society

Coalition Tunisienne Contre la Peine de Mort

Colegio de Abogados y Abogadas de Puerto Rico

Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide

Center for Prisoner's Rights

ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty)

FIACAT (International Federation of ACATs)

Legal Awareness Watch

Paris Bar

Reprieve

UIA-IROL (the Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers)