

DEATH PENALTY REPORT – JULY-AUGUST 2018

Date format: day/month/year

International Update (from 16.7.18 – 16.8.18)

- **EU/Sri Lanka** – 16.7.18 – The Delegation of the European Union, the missions of the EU Member States in Sri Lanka, and the Governments of Canada and Norway in Sri Lanka have written to the President to verify the worrying information regarding the intention of the Sri Lankan Government to resume the implementation of the death penalty after a moratorium of more than 40 years. The diplomatic missions have made it known that they strongly oppose capital punishment in all circumstances and in all cases. The letter has been signed by, amongst others, the British High Commission in Sri Lanka. Note: Officials have identified 18 prisoners on death row who are to be executed and are to recruit new executioners to carry out the hangings. (Source: The Sunday Leader.)
- **Thailand** - 18.7.18 – Following the unexpected news that the Country had resumed executions after an eight-year hiatus, Amnesty International have sent an [open letter](#) to the Government of Thailand, calling on them to recognise that the death penalty has no place in any criminal justice system, and to halt any plans to carry out further executions.
- **USA**
 - *Texas* – 17.7.18 – Christopher Young was executed, despite the opposition of the victim’s family. This was the eighth execution to have place in 2018 in Texas, the State which has executed the highest number of prisoners so far this year. (Source: CNN.)
 - *Ohio* – 20.7.18 - The death sentence of Raymond Tibbetts has been commuted to life without the possibility of parole by Governor John Kasich. The Governor cited ‘fundamental flaws’ in the sentencing procedure following the statement by a juror that mitigating evidence around Mr Tibbetts’s childhood had not been presented at the trial. The Parole Board had voted against clemency, but the Governor cited ‘the defence’s failure to present mitigating evidence, coupled with an inaccurate description of Tibbetts’s childhood by the prosecution’ which had ‘essentially prevented the jury from making an informed decision about whether Tibbetts deserved the death sentence.’ (Source: BT Com.)
 - *Tennessee* – 9.8.18 – The Execution took place of Billy Ray Irick, sentenced to death for rape and murder. His was the first execution since 2009. (Source: The Tennessean.)
 - *Nebraska* – 10.8.18 – The drug company Fresenius Kabi, has sued the State in an attempt to block the use of its medicines in the execution of Carey Dean Moore, scheduled to take place on 14th August. (See *Urgent Actions below*). The lawsuit alleges that Nebraska obtained the

drugs 'in contradiction and contravention of the distribution contracts'. Nebraska has refused to name the source of the drugs it intends to use but two of the components are manufactured by Fresenius Kabi, and it is the only company producing the third in the size obtained by the State. (Source: Death Penalty Information Center.) **Note: The execution of Carey Dean Moore took place on 14.8.2018, despite widespread objections. This was the first execution in the US using the opioid Fentanyl.** (Source: The Guardian.)

- 10.8.18 - *The Pew Research Center* have issued a [Fact Tank Report](#) noting that, while a majority of jurisdictions in the US have capital punishment on their books, a considerably smaller number of them use it regularly. (Source: The Pew Research Center)
- **Saudi Arabia** – 17.7.18 – Seven people – three Saudi nationals, three Chadian nations and one Lebanese national - were executed in one day. (Sources: Morocco World News & Human Rights Watch.)
- **Kenya** – 19.7.18 – Irungu Houghton, AI's Executive Director in Kenya, has expressed concern at the High Court's sentencing of Ruth Kamande to death for the killing of her boyfriend – 'We are concerned that Kenya continues to use this cruel, inhumane and outdated mode of punishment. This sentence is a blow to Kenya's progressive record in commuting death sentences to terms of life imprisonment.' (Source: Amnesty International.)
- **UK** –
 - 23.7.18 - The Home Secretary has said the UK would not oppose the use of the death penalty if Alexandra Kotey and El Shafee Elsheikh, alleged to be members of Islamic State, were extradited to the US. The two men have been stripped of their British Citizenship. Labour expressed concern that the UK had 'unilaterally abandoned its opposition to the death penalty. No. 10 said It was 'a long-standing position of the Government to oppose the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle' but added in this case it was 'a priority to make sure that these men face criminal prosecution'. The BBC have been told that this was not the first time the UK had dropped its request for assurances that the death penalty would not be used. (Source: BBC News.) [See our website piece.](#)
 - 26.7.18 – As a result of an intervention by the lawyers acting for the mother of El Shafee Elsheikh, the Home Office has temporarily suspended cooperation with the American authorities over the case. The legal challenge seeks to quash the Home Secretary's decision to provide evidence to be used at the trial without the assurance that he would not face the death penalty. The application raises questions of significant constitutional importance, including the ability of a Minister to agree a change from Government policy without reference to Parliament. (Source: The Guardian.)

- **Jerusalem** – 25.7.18 – The Security Cabinet failed to reach a decision on whether to advance a bill calling for capital punishment for terrorists. Defence Minister Avigdor Liberman has said ‘There is no reason we should be more enlightened than the United States and Japan in the war on terrorism’. Lior Akerman,, a former Brigadier-General who served as a Division Head in Shin Bet, said the death penalty would not act as a deterrent. (Source: The Jerusalem Post.)

- **Japan** –
 - 26.7.18 – Japan’s public broadcaster, NHK, reported that the 6 remaining members of the Aum cult found guilty of the 1995 subway sarin attack were executed. Local media reported that the authorities wished to execute all members of the cult on death row prior to the Emperor’s abdication next year. (Source: The Telegraph)

 - 27.7.18 – Despite the international outcry over this month’s executions of all 13 members of the AUM cult, Justice Minister Yoko Kamikawa has said that Japan has no plans to review its death penalty policy. (Source: The Mainichi.)

 - *See campaign action at the end*

- **Egypt** – 28.7.18 – An Egyptian Court handed down preliminary death sentences to 75 defendants in connection with the dispersal of a major protest camp in Cairo in 2015. The defendants have been referred to Egypt’s highest religious authority – the Grand Mufti – for consideration of the death penalty sentences. The verdict is scheduled to be confirmed on 8th September. (Source: Anadolu Agency.)

- **Turkey** – 1.8.18 – In the course of attending the funeral of a mother and baby, whose deaths have been blamed on Kurdish rebels, President Erdogan has said he will not hesitate to approve capital punishment if Parliament passes a law authorising it. No executions have taken place since 1984 and the Country abolished the death penalty in 2004 as part of its bid to join the European Union. (Source: BT.com.)

- **Pope Francis** – 2.8.18 – The Pope has issued a statement that the death penalty is ‘inadmissible’ and that the Catholic Church would work for its abolition across the world. Previously, the Church had viewed the imposition of the death penalty following a fair trial as an ‘appropriate response to the gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good’. Now, however, there was an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person and the possibility of redemption were not lost, even after ‘the commission of very serious crimes.’ (Source: The Guardian.)



- **Bangladesh** – 6.8.18 – In an attempt to calm street protests following the deaths of two students, the Government has promised to consider the death penalty for those convicted of deliberately causing road deaths. (Source: The Hindu.)

Note: *Overlooked for last month's International Report – Good news from Malaysia - On 2nd July 2018 the Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Home Affairs announced that the Government had put on hold the implementation of the death sentences of 17 prisoners, pending the review of the Country's death penalty laws. Only a few days previously the Deputy Prime Minister had confirmed the Government's commitment to consider abolishing the mandatory death penalty for all crimes. Source: AIUK – Anti-Death Penalty Project.)*

Urgent Actions

- *Belarus* – UA 135/18 - Iranian citizen Mehrdad Jamshidian, who suffers from acute ill-health, was detained on 14th June in Belarus. He is at imminent risk of deportation to Iran where he may be subjected to torture and the death penalty for 'apostasy' and accusations of murder. (*Circulated to DPLWG 24.7.18.*)
- *USA – Nebraska* – UA136/18 – The State is set to carry out its first execution in 21 years on 14th August. The prisoner, who has been on death row for 38 years, has given up his appeals and is not seeking clemency. Amnesty is urging the State not to resume executions. (*Circulated to DPLWG 24.7.18.*) *The execution of Carey Dean Moore took place on 14.8.18.*

Campaigning

A signing event is to take place in the Library Passageway from 9.00 to 12.00 mid-day on **Saturday 1st September** in advance of the World Day Against the Death Penalty on 10th October. This is a national Amnesty International action which has been organised by the Anti-Death Penalty Project.

People will be asked to sign coloured luggage labels – calling for an end to the Death Penalty in Japan – which will be tied to a 'Tree of Life'. Groups have been asked to send the labels to AIUK. By 15th September. The Amnesty Tree of Life will then be taken to the Japanese Embassy on 10th October.

Note: In the Summer, people across Japan write their wishes for the year on small strips of paper and tie them to bamboo branches. This is believed to be a 2,000-year-old tradition celebrating the day when two lovers, driven apart, are able to be together.

Please note, there is no meeting in August – the next group meeting is on Thursday 13th September.