



**Response to the Call for inputs for the Secretary-General’s report on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty:
Lessons learned and recommendations**

Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights

a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1996

Humans Remain

ACAT Liberia

The Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty

Death Penalty Focus

in Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council since 2017

Kurdistan without Genocide

and

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

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The Advocates for Human Rights (The Advocates) is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law since its founding in 1983. The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publication. The Advocates is the primary provider of legal services to low-income asylum seekers in the Upper Midwest region of the United States. The Advocates is committed to ensuring human rights protection for women around the world. The Advocates has published more than 25 reports on violence against women as a human rights issue, provided consultation and commentary of draft laws on domestic violence, and trained lawyers, police, prosecutors, judges, and other law enforcement personnel to effectively implement new and existing laws on domestic violence. In 1991, The Advocates adopted a formal commitment to oppose the death penalty worldwide and organized a death penalty project to provide pro bono assistance on post-conviction appeals, as well as education and advocacy to end capital punishment. The Advocates currently holds a seat on the Steering Committee of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty.

Humans Remain stands as an advocacy effort dedicated to supporting Death Row prisoners in Mississippi and amplifying their voices. Through educating, storytelling and campaigning we work towards the worldwide abolition of the death penalty seeking justice that is humane, equitable and compassionate.

Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT Liberia) is a national non-governmental organization founded in May 2004. It is a national human rights organization that works to promote, defend and protect human rights by advocating for reform in the criminal justice

system (police, court and correction), the abolition of the death penalty, abolition of torture and the rehabilitation of its victims. ACAT Liberia is a member of the International Federation of ACATs (FIACAT) based in France. FIACAT has member associations in 30 countries on 4 continents around the globe. ACAT Liberia is also a member of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

The Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty (TAEDP) is the first coalition in Taiwan dedicated to abolishing the death penalty and promoting reform of the criminal justice system. Established in 2003, it brings together abolitionist groups, NGOs, and research institutes. TAEDP works on individual capital cases, monitors trial procedures to safeguard fair trial rights, and campaigns to prevent wrongful executions. The organization also provides training and seminars for criminal defense lawyers. Beyond capital punishment, TAEDP advocates for victims' rights and stronger support systems for those affected by serious crimes. It engages the public through forums, seminars, and educational programs developed in collaboration with teachers.

Death Penalty Focus is committed to the abolition of the death penalty through public education, grassroots organizing, political advocacy, media outreach, and domestic and international coalition-building since 1988. Over the past 38 years, DPF has continued to raise awareness of how broken the death penalty system is.

Kurdistan without Genocide (KWG) is a non-governmental and non-profit organization working for human rights and against the genocide in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. KWG is working to achieve the goals of: getting international recognition for the crimes perpetrated against the Kurdish people; nationalization of events in Kurdistan to create a human-friendly awareness in the community in order to prevent recurrences; prosecution of criminals in domestic and international courts, including people responsible for planning and implementing genocide and ethnic cleansing and their accomplices; abolition of the death penalty in Kurdistan, Iraq, and the Middle East; working for a country without weapons and violence.

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty is a membership-based global network committed to strengthening the international dimension of the fight against the death penalty. Established in 2002, its ultimate objective is to obtain the universal abolition of the death penalty. To achieve its goal, the World Coalition advocates for a definitive end to death sentences and executions in those countries where the death penalty is in force. In some countries, it is seeking to obtain a reduction in the use of capital punishment as a first step towards abolition.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report responds to a call for inputs to assist the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in preparing the Secretary-General's report on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. The report incorporates responses to an April 2026 survey of members of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, focusing on developments since 17 December 2024. This report focuses on lessons learned and recommendations.

Experiences, lessons learned, and impacts of a moratorium

2. ACAT Liberia, a member of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty and the International Federation of Actions by Christians Against Torture (FIACAT), reports that Liberian civil society has learned several lessons from the country's ongoing *de facto* moratorium on executions. First, the country's long-standing *de facto* moratorium on executions (since 2000) and the absence of new death sentences since 2021 has created time for legislative reform and public debate on abolition of the death penalty. The moratorium has also prevented human rights violations associated with executions and has reduced pressure on the prison system regarding management of death row. The organization concludes that "[m]aintaining a moratorium, even without formal abolition, creates space for legal reform, advocacy, and alignment with international human rights standards."
3. ACAT Liberia adds that the moratorium has had several positive impacts on human rights culture in Liberia, including normalizing alternatives to the death penalty and allowing civil society organizations to engage with authorities to strengthen broader justice reforms. The organization observes that "[a] moratorium can catalyze broader improvements in detention conditions and human rights protections, showing that suspension of executions has practical benefits beyond legislation."
4. ACAT Liberia states that Liberia's long-standing moratorium has proved the feasibility of a legal system that does not rely on the death penalty, providing "evidence to policymakers that the state can function without executing prisoners, reducing fears that abolition would compromise public safety or justice." The moratorium is thereby "a powerful tool for encouraging permanent abolition." The moratorium has also demonstrated the importance of parliamentary advocacy and coalition-building between civil society and lawmakers. Civil society must work to preserve and expand political will across election cycles, because delays can stall reform.
5. ACAT Liberia also reports that the moratorium has given Liberian civil society organizations the opportunity to test and improve public engagement on abolition, concluding that "[s]ustained awareness-raising and international support are critical to converting a moratorium into lasting legislative change." The public is more receptive to abolition when they have information about human rights, fairness of trials, and alternatives to the death penalty. The organization observes that collaboration with international partners strengthens both the legitimacy of reform efforts and the momentum of reform.
6. ACAT Liberia highlights some challenges, including the legal uncertainty of the death penalty, which can exacerbate anxiety for people under sentence of death and their families. Legislative delays expose the need for continuous vigilance and ongoing advocacy, including monitoring and technical support for allied lawmakers.

7. Rescue Alternatives Liberia observes that Liberia faced a setback with the change of government because the new administration is undoing progress that the previous government had achieved. The organization adds that abolitionists in Liberia face a challenge because the National Legislature has limited political will to pass the anti-death penalty bill.
8. A World Coalition member in Pakistan reports that “Pakistan’s experience . . . [with] a de facto pause in executions in the absence of a formal moratorium[] offer[s] several lessons for death penalty reform.” The organization observes that a country such as Pakistan can halt executions in practice as a way to “creat[e] space for policy reflection and incremental reform,” which can “coincid[e] with limited legislative steps to narrow the scope of capital punishment, . . . suggesting that gradual restriction is politically and legally feasible.” This incremental approach, however, “has underscored key limitations.” The pause “remains fragile and reversible, providing no legal certainty for individuals on death row.” And the lack of transparency regarding death penalty practices is a barrier to “accountability and informed policymaking.” Pakistan’s situation, the organization contends, “highlights the importance of formalizing a moratorium as a critical step toward abolition, including through clear legal safeguards, improved data collection, and strengthened fair trial protections.” The organization concludes that in Pakistan’s experience, “a de facto suspension of executions may create momentum for reform,” but “it is insufficient on its own to ensure durable progress toward limiting or abolishing the death penalty without accompanying legal and institutional measures.” Such pauses “are most effective when accompanied by structured policy measures aimed at reducing death sentences, improving procedural safeguards, and ensuring that time is used to move progressively toward a rights-based approach to criminal justice reform.” The organization highlights “the importance of treating such pauses not merely as an absence of enforcement, but as a temporary respite that can enable meaningful review and reform of the criminal justice system.” The danger, however, is that stakeholders do not systematically use the period “to reassess capital cases, address potential wrongful convictions, or establish clear pathways for commutation or resentencing.” The prolonged legal uncertainty can “exacerbate psychological harm associated with extended detention under sentence of death.”
9. Prisoners’ Future Foundation (PFF) points out the need for ongoing attention for the ten people who remain under sentence of death in Zambia. PFF, which does work in other countries in the region that retain the death penalty, points out that “working with government and correctional centres can make it easy to access statistics for those on death row in other countries.”

Recommendations to advance a moratorium on executions or to advance the abolition of the death penalty

10. ACAT Liberia suggests that in the short-term, countries like Liberia should formalize their moratoriums while authorities provide guidance to courts and communicate publicly their commitment to the moratorium. In the medium-term, authorities should finalize the process of abolishing the death penalty in law, while reviewing and commuting any remaining death sentences and strengthening public dialogue about the need for abolition. In the long-term, authorities should integrate abolition into comprehensive criminal justice reform, ideally with the assistance and support of international partners.

11. Rescue Alternatives Liberia contends that the Liberian Government should prioritize passage of the anti-death penalty bill.
12. The Coalition member in Pakistan recommends “a combination of legal, policy, and institutional measures” to advance the country’s moratorium on executions and move toward the abolition of the death penalty. “First, the government should adopt an official, public moratorium on executions, providing immediate protection for individuals on death row and signaling commitment to reform. Second, Pakistan should continue to restrict the scope of the death penalty by removing it from all offences that do not meet the threshold of ‘most serious crimes’ under international law, with a view to eventual abolition. Third, authorities should strengthen fair trial safeguards in capital cases, including ensuring access to competent legal representation, excluding evidence obtained through torture, and standardizing procedures for age determination and mental health assessments.”
13. The Coalition member in Pakistan also recommends reforms to improve transparency and data collection, “including the publication of regularly updated, disaggregated data on death sentences, executions, and post-conviction outcomes.” Authorities should also formalize the process of petitioning for mercy or commutation, with “clear procedures and criteria to ensure it operates as an effective safeguard.”
14. The Coalition member in Pakistan also recommends that authorities in Pakistan “engage constructively with international human rights mechanisms, including supporting resolutions on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty and aligning domestic law and practice with its obligations under international treaties.” For example, Pakistan should ensure that its methods of execution are fully compliant with the prohibition against torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment. Further, Pakistan should “undertake a comprehensive review of all offences carrying the death penalty with the objective of significantly reducing the number of capital offences and limiting the death penalty strictly to the ‘most serious crimes.’” Such measures “would establish a coherent pathway from restriction to suspension and, ultimately, abolition of the death penalty” in Pakistan.
15. The Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty expresses the hope that international law experts will explicitly define the death penalty as a form of torture. TAEDP also calls on authorities to investigate the existence of the “death row phenomenon” in Taiwan.
16. Humans Remain, a member of the World Coalition based in the United Kingdom but focusing on death penalty practices in the state of Mississippi in the USA, reports that civil society organizations such as theirs continue to write to state lawmakers to encourage them to institute a moratorium on executions and move toward abolition.
17. PFF recommends that despite Zambia’s abolition of the death penalty in 2022, civil society must continue with advocacy “at mission level, country and region.” PFF’s experience suggests that civil society organizations that have achieved success in abolishing the death penalty in their countries may be able to leverage that experience to press for abolition in neighboring countries as well.