



DEATH PENALTY RESEARCH UNIT (DPRU) ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23



CENTRE FOR CRIMINOLOGY
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Cover image credit: Part of an artwork by U.S. death row exoneree Ndume Olatushani, exhibited in the 'Voices from Death Row' exhibition in Oxford in May 2023.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

At the end of our third year of research and engagement, the Death Penalty Research Unit (DPRU) looks back on another busy and successful year: a year of beginnings, of continued engagement on certain countries and themes, most of it with our partner organisation, the Death Penalty Project (DPP), and of endings.

To start at the end, I'm particularly proud of the completion of our interactive database that 'maps' death row for foreign national prisoners sentenced to death across Asia and the Middle East. I conceived of this work in 2017 after spending time in Malaysia, interviewing consular officers for various embassies and legal representatives about their roles in protecting the rights to consular assistance of foreign nationals on death row.

Foreign nationals have been identified by the United Nations as a vulnerable group deserving of protection, which – in capital cases – can make the difference between life and death but have attracted too little academic attention. With small grants from the University of Oxford John Fell Fund and the British Academy, further research began in 2018, leading to the establishment of a network of NGOs and scholars at the DPP, Eleos Justice, Justice Project Pakistan, Harm Reduction International, Project 39A (Delhi) and the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN).

The idea of developing an interactive database emerged from our discussions and in 2020, with funding from an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Impact Acceleration Account award, Jocelyn Hutton and the DPRU team started to gather material for an interactive database on foreign nationals at risk of capital punishment in Asia and the Middle East, regions with a disproportionate number of migrants and others without citizenship detained for capital offences.

We also completed an Official Development Assistance (ODA)-funded project examining drug laws and aspirations for the future of drug policy in Indonesia. Daniel Cullen, Lucy Harry and Jocelyn Hutton worked collaboratively with our principal partner for this grant, LBH Masyarakat (Community Legal Aid Institute, Indonesia) and a group of key Indonesian NGOs working on drug policy.

Our work with the DPP on engagement and advocacy in Asia and Africa draws on collaborative research. In February, we travelled to Taiwan for public events and meetings with civil society organisations and key political and legal stakeholders to strengthen advocacy and dialogue on the abolition of the death penalty, drawing on our opinion research. We made visits to Nairobi, launching our study of 671 prisoners who had been sentenced to death across Kenya, in January 2023, and returning in September to assist the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights in supporting a new Private Members' Bill intended to abolish the death penalty. We also travelled to Zimbabwe to continue our engagement with NGOs, politicians, embassies and local lawyers set on working with government to bring about abolition.

In July, the death penalty was abolished in Ghana. We had assisted the DPP in their engagement and advocacy in the country, traveling to Accra twice during the year to meet with key stakeholders supporting a Private Members' Bill to bring about abolition. This came almost exactly two years after abolition was secured in Sierra Leone after similar advocacy there. In both cases, success came about from concerted efforts by civil society, embassies and others on the ground. Our role was to support and offer information and advice stemming from years of research, and in the case of the DPP, strategic litigation, engagement and advocacy in retentionist countries around the world. Such outcomes are not common but are a particularly rewarding part of what we do, and we are delighted to have been given the opportunity to play a small part in the process.

Ghana, Zimbabwe and Kenya are – or were – three among the many ‘abolitionist de facto’ (ADF) countries in Africa, countries that continue to sentence people to death but have not executed anyone for years, in some cases decades. Following a research seminar in Oxford to discuss the rationale for and symbolic functions performed by retention without executions, we have embarked on new research to address perceived obstacles to full abolition and to provide the knowledge and tools to navigate these across Africa and the Caribbean. We also aim to modernise the ADF policy framework, originally conceptualised 50 years ago, when ADF status was often seen as a brief phase inevitably preceding full abolition, requiring little action or reflection. This research (led by Daniel Cullen, Parvais Jabbar (DPP) and I) will continue for two years.

We are into the second year of our ESRC-funded research on ‘Mapping the political economy of drugs and the death penalty in Southeast Asia’. Over the year, my co-investigator, Parvais Jabbar and I have worked with the Indonesian Atma Jaya University and our Advisory Board in Jakarta, developing the work that began with our earlier research on drug prisoners in Jakarta, which was launched at the Harm Reduction International conference in Melbourne in April.

Over the past twelve months, we have conducted interviews and held group discussions with judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers and civil society organisations focused on drug policy, while conducting interviews with those who commit drug offences in Indonesia in the community and in prisons. In this work, we have been supported not only by our partner organisations in Jakarta but by the team in Oxford, two of whom have now moved on to other exciting roles. Lucy Harry and Jocelyn Hutton have been valuable assets to the DPRU and though no longer Research Officers, they continue to support our work in their roles as Research Associates. I am extremely grateful for their commitment, energy and tenacity.

The DPRU builds on the strong foundations laid by the late Professor Roger Hood, and he is remembered in the work we do. I was delighted this year to complete (with Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms) a Biographical Memoir of Roger and to see his contribution to death penalty scholarship and advocacy recognised by the 8th World Congress Against the Death Penalty in Berlin.

The DPRU is also committed to encouraging death penalty scholarship and advocacy through education and events and so it is fitting to end this note with mention of the ‘Voices from Death Row’ art exhibition organised by DPRU student members, Amelia Inglis and Lucrezia Rizzelli. This was an event that the DPRU and DPP were particularly proud to have been involved with but for which all credit goes to Amelia and Lucrezia. We had invited Pete Ouko, the founder of a justice



charity in Kenya, Crime Si Poa, to present at the event. I had not imagined at the start of this academic year that I might share a podium in Lincoln College Oxford with a man who was wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death in Kenya and who managed to persuade fourteen scholars to sit on the floor to demonstrate just how overcrowded Kenyan prison cells are. But this photograph (left) provides proof of just that...

Carolyn Hoyle, December 2023

DPRU UPDATES

LAUNCH OF 'FOREIGN NATIONALS ON DEATH ROW' DATABASE



On 31 August 2023, the DPRU [launched](#) its 'Foreign Nationals on Death Row' database, the culmination of a long-term project managed by Research Officer Jocelyn Hutton over a period of three years as part of the DPRU's 'Mapping Death Row' research.

The online database, established through partnerships with civil society organisations, was created in order to map cases of foreign nationals, often migrant workers, at risk of the death penalty across Asia and the Middle East, in recognition of their particular vulnerabilities and disproportionate risk of death sentencing and execution.

They face difficulties in accessing justice, including legal or consular representation, translation services and local support networks, and they experience discrimination, torture and mistreatment in some parts of these regions.

Assisted by DPRU-DPP research interns from the Oxford MSc in Criminology & Criminal Justice, the DPRU worked with HURIDOCS, a human rights software developer, to build an interactive database mapping 1,242 cases of foreign nationals on death row. It provides information on socio-demographic, jurisdictional and offence-related data, and includes data visualisations and maps which illuminate the numbers and trends that emerged.

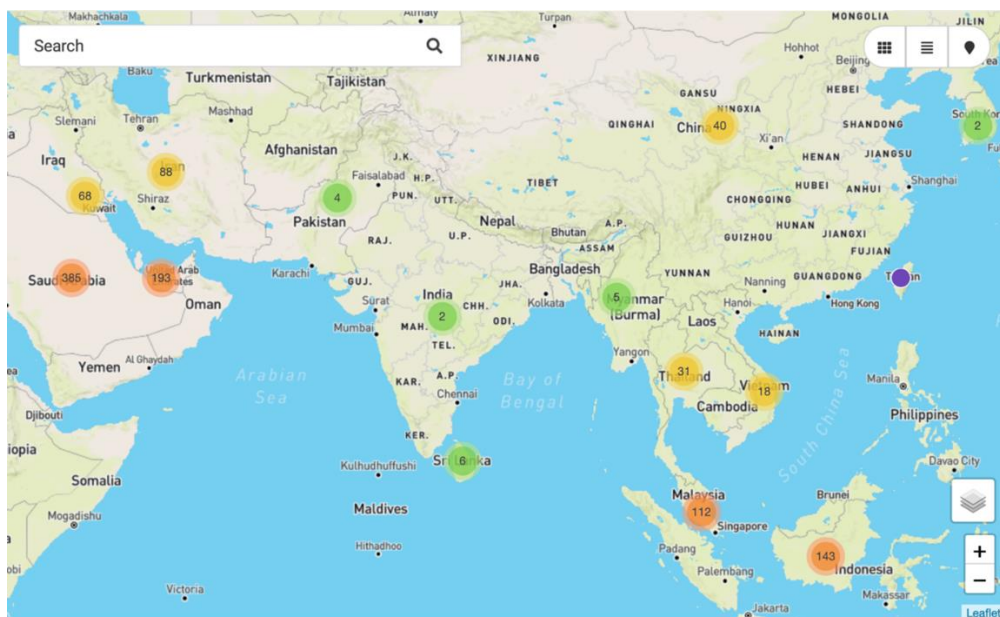


Image: A case map displayed on the 'Foreign Nationals on Death Row' database.

Researchers can freely gain access to the full dataset, including all cases, as well as country reports and other resources. Users can build custom searches regarding cases, countries and relevant themes. By browsing the findings and conducting targeted research, they can explore the trends within a given region or state.

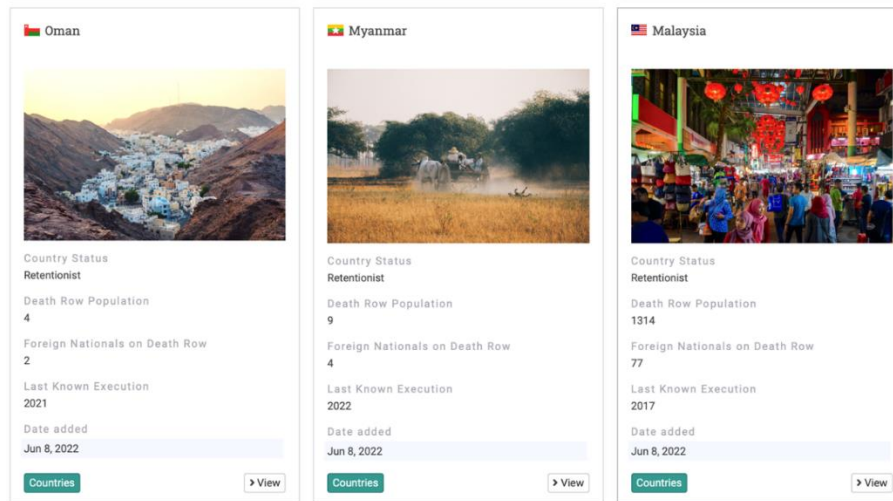


Image: Country records displayed on the 'Foreign Nationals on Death Row' database.

The work the DPRU team has done on foreign nationals at risk of capital punishment has led to a range of academic and non-academic publications and dissemination events during the year, including a lecture at York University (Toronto) on 'The death penalty as a migration enforcement practice: The case of foreign national women in Malaysia' and a contribution to lawyers' training in Malaysia, both by Lucy Harry.

The DPRU is now beginning work on a similar interactive database mapping cases of individuals on death row for drug offences, also in collaboration with HURIDOCS, as part of its ESRC research project 'Mapping the political economy of drugs and the death penalty in Southeast Asia', assisted by Francesca Rigg.

The 'Foreign Nationals on Death Row' database can be accessed at: <https://foreign-nationals.uwazi.io>

NEW RESEARCH PROJECT ON 'ABOLITIONIST DE FACTO' STATUS

In July 2023, the DPRU was awarded a new grant through the Oxford Policy Engagement Network's Public Policy Challenge Fund (£49,312), for a two-year research project focused on 'abolitionist de facto' (ADF) status: 'Abolitionist in practice: Developing a new framework for policymakers in countries which do not execute'. The project will be undertaken in collaboration with our co-investigator, Parvais Jabbar of the Death Penalty Project.

There are approximately 40 states worldwide that have ADF status, primarily in Africa and the Caribbean. Countries can remain ADF for many decades: the median time without an execution is 32 years, while in some cases this is much longer (66 years for Brunei, 71 for the Maldives). Yet although executions are not carried out in ADF states, death sentences can still be imposed. This means that individuals live on death row, in some cases leading to death row populations of several hundred.

NEW RESEARCH PROJECT ON 'ABOLITIONIST DE FACTO' STATUS (CONT.)

The policy challenge in those jurisdictions is twofold: to address both states' perceived obstacles to full abolition and to provide the knowledge and tools to navigate these; and to modernise the ADF policy framework, originally conceptualised 50 years ago, when ADF status was seen as constituting a brief phase inevitably preceding full abolition, requiring little action or reflection. Today, this can result in entrenched retention without executions rather than facilitating full abolition.

The DPRU and the DPP's new research project is intended to directly address the question of why states remain ADF. Working with both academic experts and policymakers, the project team seeks to further develop the intellectual framework underpinning the ADF concept, and to produce a comprehensive dataset and interactive online map of ADF states worldwide.

As an engagement-oriented project, it is hoped that working directly with policymakers in case study states in Africa and the Caribbean will assist in understanding the barriers to abolition in ADF contexts, lessons from which could be used as a template by policymakers elsewhere. Given our goal of encouraging wider discourse on this topic, we welcome engagement as we develop this project over the coming months.

BRITISH ACADEMY MEMOIR OF PROFESSOR ROGER HOOD



On 29 September, the British Academy published an official Biographical Memoir of the late Professor Roger Hood (1936–2020), as part of its series of Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy. Professor Hood was elected as a Fellow of the British Academy in 1992.

The Memoir was authored by Professor Sir Tony Bottoms, Emeritus Wolfson Professor of Criminology at the University of Cambridge, and Director of the DPRU Carolyn Hoyle.

It reflects on Professor Hood's significant intellectual contributions to the discipline of criminology through his role in the early development of criminological scholarship in the UK and as a world-leading scholar on all aspects of the use of the death penalty internationally, as well as his considerable contributions to life at All Souls College, Oxford and the Oxford Centre for Criminology.

The DPRU's ambitions are unambiguously based on the work and approach that Professor Hood developed in collaboration with the Death Penalty Project. Its purpose is not only to elucidate capital punishment laws and practices, but to challenge them, with the explicit aim of abolition or, failing that, progressive restriction, and stands as a fitting legacy of Roger's groundbreaking work in this field. Professor Hood's Biographical Memoir can be read [here](#).

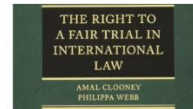
UPDATES ON THE DPRU BLOG

The DPRU Blog has now been active for close to three years, publishing posts from academic researchers, lawyers, criminal justice practitioners, human rights advocates and graduate students on a wide range of topics related to the death penalty, from various theoretical and empirical perspectives.

The death penalty and scrupulous respect for the right to a fair trial

13 November 2023

by Philippa Webb, Daisy Peterson



Rallying lawmakers in the American South: An investigation of Virginia's path to abolition

24 October 2023

by Aimee Clesi



The enigma of de facto abolition: Researching the death penalty in countries which do not execute

10 October 2023

by Daniel Cullen



'We don't execute': The neglected reality of condemned prisoners in ADF countries

10 October 2023

by Amanda Clift-Matthews



Image: A selection of the most recent posts on the DPRU Blog.

The DPRU Blog's publications from the last year have covered a very wide range of topics and jurisdictions, including the following posts:

- [Diana Peel, 'Domestic violence and the death penalty in Uganda'](#)
- [Ron Dudai, 'The resurgence of the death penalty in Israel'](#)
- [Lynsey Black, 'Women and the death penalty in Ireland'](#)
- [Carolyn Hoyle and Saul Lehrfreund, 'The road to abolition in Ghana'](#)
- [Moses Sakai, 'Papua New Guinea should become a regional advocate for abolition'](#)
- [Aimee Clesi, 'An investigation of Virginia's path to abolition'](#)
- [Snehal Dhote, 'Capital sentencing reform in India'](#)
- [John Bessler, 'The death penalty as a torturous practice'](#)
- [David Rose, 'Pete Ouko's 18 years on death row in Kenya'](#)
- [Philippa Webb and Daisy Peterson, 'The right to a fair trial in capital cases'](#)

We were also pleased to be awarded a small grant (£4,844) from the Faculty of Law's Faculty Internet Engagement Fund (FIEF), to develop a new series of Q&A interviews with death penalty lawyers working in the Global South. The forthcoming interview series, building on the DPRU Blog's ongoing Q&A series, will explore the work of death penalty litigation practitioners in the Global South, addressing topics such as notable past cases, career trajectories, motivations and challenges of the work, and the specifics of their jurisdictions.

The DPRU Blog welcomes new contributions: guidelines for submissions, editorial policies and contact details are available [here](#).

DPRU RESEARCH

ESRC RESEARCH PROJECT ON DRUG OFFENDING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



The DPRU is currently in the second year of its three-year ESRC research project, 'Mapping the political economy of drugs and the death penalty in Southeast Asia' (2022-2025), in partnership with the Death Penalty Project. This research project is focused on understanding who is convicted of drug offences and sentenced to death in Southeast Asia, and whether there is any deterrent effect of the death penalty in relation to drug offences.

While the project 'maps' death row for drugs across the region, Indonesia was chosen as a case study for two fieldwork studies: one with drug offenders in prison, who are sentenced to death, and the second with those in the community involved in drug networks. Interviews are currently underway, assisted by our colleagues at Atma Jaya University.

To continue the progress on our research in the region, Carolyn Hoyle and Parvais Jabbar visited Indonesia in April and then again in June, for a series of meetings with local partners, including Atma Jaya University and LBH Masyarakat, and other NGOs, as well as with government officials. These meetings included a meeting with the Minister of Law and Human Rights, Yasonna Laoly,

This year saw the establishment of the project's Advisory Board to support the project in reaching its objectives, from the fieldwork phase through to dissemination and wider engagement efforts. It includes Deputy Minister for Law and Human Rights Professor Edward O.S. Hiariej, Professor Harkristuti Harkrisnowo and Todung Mulya Lubis, a leading human rights lawyer.



Image: Parvais Jabbar and Carolyn Hoyle meet with project partners in Indonesia.

Alongside their work in Indonesia, Carolyn and Parvais continued to engage with researchers and policymakers in the wider region on punishment for drug offences. In June, they presented their work at a workshop on drug laws in Asia, at the Yong Pung How School of Law at the Singapore Management University, and in the same month, the DPRU hosted a leading Malaysian academic on drug policy, Professor B Vicknasingam, who spoke to faculty and students in Oxford about the criminalisation of drug use in Malaysia.

ODA GRANT ON SOCIOECONOMIC EXCLUSION AND DRUG POLICY



Image: Daniel Cullen speaks at the knowledge exchange workshop in Jakarta.

In November 2022, Carolyn Hoyle was awarded a new grant (£45,812) from the University of Oxford's internal Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding allocation, for a short-term research project exploring socioeconomic exclusion in individuals' pathways to drug offending in Indonesia.

This project was motivated by the intention to engage with the Indonesian government at a time when potential legislative reform (through the drafting of a new Narcotics Bill) provides an opportunity for significant reduction in the future impacts of drug crime legislation on the most disadvantaged.

The research, undertaken in partnership with the Indonesian legal organisation LBH Masyarakat, involved interviews with civil society organisations focused on drug policy and supporting drug users, the production of expert reports and case studies by civil society organisations, and the preparation of a report for the Ministry of Law and Human Rights.

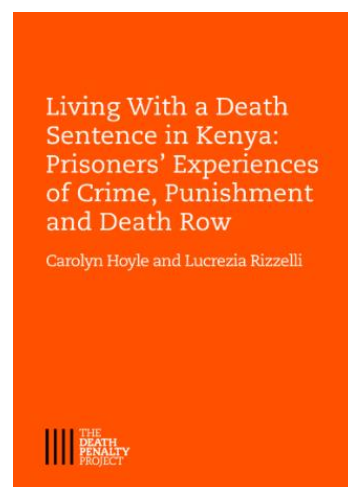
In February 2023, the DPRU's Daniel Cullen, Jocelyn Hutton and Lucy Harry organised a knowledge exchange workshop in Jakarta on drug policy in Indonesia, together with LBH Masyarakat and representatives from six civil society organisations. They discussed current drug policies in Indonesia and prospects for reform.

LAUNCH OF KENYA SOCIOECONOMIC RESEARCH REPORT

In January 2023, the Death Penalty Project (DPP) launched a new research report on the death penalty in Kenya in collaboration with the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR).

Living with a Death Sentence in Kenya focuses on death sentenced prisoners' socioeconomic backgrounds and profiles, their pathways to, and motivation for, offending, as well as their experiences of the criminal justice process and of imprisonment. Perhaps not surprisingly, the majority were poorly educated and badly paid, while most were responsible for supporting dependents.

Among the key findings of the report, we learnt that 95% of the 671 prisoners we interviewed who had been convicted of robbery and 86% who had been convicted of murder did not know that those crimes were punishable by death at the time of the offence. They could clearly not have been deterred by this harsh punishment.



LAUNCH OF KENYA SOCIOECONOMIC RESEARCH REPORT (CONT.)



Image: Carolyn Hoyle and the DPP's Parvais Jabbar at the report launch in Nairobi.

The report was launched in Nairobi, Kenya, on 24 January, and received widespread media coverage. The *Living with a Death Sentence in Kenya* report can be read in full (88 pp) [on the DPP website](#).

The DPP and DPRU's engagement and advocacy in relation to this report built

on two previous DPP reports authored by Carolyn Hoyle and published in 2022, under the title *The Death Penalty in Kenya: A Punishment that has Died Out in Practice*. [Part one](#) of the two reports examined public opinion in relation to the death penalty in Kenya, while [part two](#) explored support for abolition among opinion leaders in the country.

Since the launch, Kenya has taken steps in the direction of abolition. In July, President William Ruto commuted the death sentences of all prisoners prior to 22 November 2022, a total of around 600 people. Furthermore, days after this announcement, the Kenyan Parliament's Justice and Legal Affairs Committee adopted amendment proposals introduced by minority leader Opiyo Wandayi, Member of Parliament for Ugunja, seeking to abolish the death penalty.



Image: Parvais Jabbar speaks at the report launch in Nairobi.

Carolyn Hoyle and Parvais Jabbar visited Kenya in September 2023 to hold engagement and advocacy meetings with civil society organisations and local partners with a view to supporting the movement towards abolition in the country, providing expert input into the national conversation on the topic.

MEDIA & ENGAGEMENT

On 23 January, Carolyn Hoyle and Parvais Jabbar published an article on *The Conversation* website, titled '[Kenyan prisoners on death row weren't deterred by the threat of the death penalty: New research findings](#)', summarising the findings from the *Living with a Death Sentence* report.

On 26 January, Carolyn Hoyle and Parvais Jabbar published an op-ed in Kenya's *The Star* newspaper, headlined '[Death penalty doesn't deter crime](#)'.

The *Living with a Death Sentence* report received positive coverage from a range of media outlets in Kenya, featured in online news articles from [The Star](#), [The Standard](#), [Capital News](#), [Kenya Times](#), [Kenya News Agency](#) and [NTV Kenya](#), and in print in *The Nairobiian*.

It also had TV/video coverage from [K24TV](#), [The Informer](#), [KTN News](#) and [Citizen TV Kenya](#).

To reach a wider audience, including young people, the DPP commissioned a short, animated video (3.5 mins), on the findings, available to view on [YouTube](#).

NEW DPRU RESEARCH ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

During the past year, the DPRU continued its research on the death penalty in the Middle East, funded by the John Fell Fund grant 'Mapping death row for drug offences in the Middle East: Gender, citizenship and justice' (2022–2023).

In November 2022, this work resulted in a long-read article on *The Conversation* presenting new DPRU research, produced in collaboration with a number of international partners, on the experiences of foreign nationals in the criminal justice systems of Qatar and other Gulf states, published at the time of the FIFA Men's World Cup 2022 hosted by Qatar. Drawing on case data from the DPRU's 'Mapping Death Row' project, the article argued that Qatar's authorities are ignoring international law by failing to inform embassies when those from its 'invisible migrant workforce' are arrested, detained or pending a capital trial. This can be read on *The Conversation* website [here](#).

JOURNAL ARTICLE

A Disproportionate Risk of Being Executed: Why Pakistani Migrants Are Vulnerable to Capital Punishment in Saudi Arabia

Carolyn Hoyle, Jocelyn Hutton, Lucy Harry

The British Journal of Criminology, azac100, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azac100>
Published: 07 January 2023

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Abstract

Many labour migrants in the Arab Gulf countries are from South Asia. Necessary to local economies, they enjoy few rights and protections from host states, particularly when accused of serious crimes. Our original empirical data suggests a disproportionate number of Pakistanis sentenced to death and executed in Saudi Arabia and we explore explanations within a wider discussion of the place and experiences of South Asian migrants in the Gulf. Our data suggest that drug laws and penal policies leave migrant workers particularly susceptible to capital punishment, with the administration of migrant employment recruitment processes exposing Pakistanis to coercion into drug trafficking such that some could be regarded not as criminally liable but as victims of human trafficking.

Issue Section: Article

In January 2023, a new academic article by Carolyn, Jocelyn and Lucy was published in the *British Journal of Criminology*. Exploring the experiences of male Pakistani migrant workers sentenced to death for drug couriering in Saudi Arabia, it argued that drug laws and penal policies leave migrant workers in the Gulf region particularly susceptible to capital punishment. The full article can be accessed through the Oxford University Press website [here](#).

In early 2023, Jocelyn Hutton, Lucy Harry and Francesca Rigg produced a report on 'The death penalty and human rights in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)', at the invitation of the Global Alliance against Trafficking in Women (GAATW), drawing on DPRU research on migrant workers facing the death penalty in the Middle East. The

report was prepared ahead of the UAE's review under the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review process in May 2023, and included information on capital punishment in the UAE, foreign nationals on death row, conditions of detention and recommendations.

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Sage Journals

Article

Migratory dependency and the death penalty: Foreign nationals facing capital punishment in the Gulf

Lucy Harry, Carolyn Hoyle, and Jocelyn Hutton

Abstract

This article focuses on the cases of 664 foreign nationals, the majority of whom are migrant workers, under sentence of death across the Gulf states (including Jordan and Lebanon) between 2016 and 2021. The features of these cases suggest that they are inextricably linked to migrant workers' dependency under the kafala system, with examples of migrants duped into smuggling drugs across the border by their migrant broker, and once in country, accounts of violent altercations due to disputes about exit visas, and in the case of migrant domestic workers, self-defence against sexual violence. Engaging with the burgeoning literature on immigration, exploitation and criminalisation, as well as scholarship on capital punishment, this article will explore the multiple and unique layers of dependency fostered by the kafala system that place migrant workers at higher risk of the death penalty in these Gulf jurisdictions.

Keywords
death penalty, Foreign Nationals, Violent Crime, Migrant workers, precarity

In July 2023, Carolyn Hoyle, Jocelyn Hutton and Lucy Harry published an article in the journal *Punishment & Society*, on foreign nationals facing capital punishment in Gulf countries. It focuses on the cases of 664 foreign nationals, mostly migrant workers, under sentence of death across the Gulf between 2016 and 2021. It highlights the role of migrant workers' dependency under the kafala system, with examples of migrants duped into smuggling drugs across the border by their migrant brokers, and once in country, accounts of violent altercations due to disputes about exit visas, and in the case of migrant domestic workers, self-defence against sexual violence. The article can be read in full in *Punishment & Society* [here](#).

DPRU MEMBERS

DPRU STAFF



Professor Carolyn Hoyle, Director of the DPRU, has been researching and teaching on the death penalty for almost 20 years. She works closely with the Death Penalty Project on research that explores the rationales for retention, not least deterrence and public opinion, and uses that research to engage with governments and policymakers and to support civil society organisations in their efforts to bring about abolition or progressive restriction of capital punishment. Her work focuses primarily on Southeast Asia and on Commonwealth countries across Africa and the Caribbean.



Daniel Cullen is Project Manager in the DPRU, where he is lead researcher on the project 'Abolitionist in practice: Challenging the death penalty in countries which do not execute' (2023-25), as well as contributing to the DPRU's wider portfolio of research projects. He also holds the role of Managing Editor of the DPRU Blog. He previously worked in the Strategic Litigation Unit at Amnesty International and the Human Rights & Refugees programme at the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva.

DPRU PARTNERS



Parvais Jabbar is Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of the Death Penalty Project. He has for over two decades represented individuals facing the death penalty around the world at the appellate level and before international bodies. A recognised expert on the death penalty and human rights law, he has an MBE for his services to international human rights.



Saul Lehrfreund is Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of the Death Penalty Project. He has dedicated his career to representing prisoners facing the death penalty in criminal and constitutional proceedings and also before international tribunals and courts. He is a leading authority on capital punishment and international human rights law and has an MBE for services to international human rights.

DPRU RESEARCH ASSOCIATES



Dr Ron Dudai is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Ben Gurion University, and serves on the boards of several human rights organisations. His work has been published in leading journals and his recent monograph *Penalty in the Underground: The IRA's Pursuit of Informers* (2022) is published by Oxford University Press. In a current article in *Theoretical Criminology*, he assesses the prospects for global abolition.



Dr Lucy Harry has worked on DPRU projects on the death penalty in Indonesia and wider Southeast Asia and on DPP projects in Kenya. Her doctoral research focused on cases of women sentenced to death for drug trafficking in Malaysia, and she has published and presented widely on this topic, including: 'The Legacy of Colonial Patriarchy in the Current Administration of the Malaysian Death Penalty' in Olivetti *et al.* (eds.), *Decolonizing the Criminal Question* (2023). She has also conducted research for the London Drugs Commission.



Jocelyn Hutton has worked on DPRU research on punishment for drug offences in Indonesia. She previously led the Mapping Death Row project, researching foreign nationals sentenced to death across the Middle East and Asia. She worked with Lucy Harry on a submission for the UAE's Periodic Review on 'The Death Penalty and Human Rights in the UAE' and is currently writing with Harry on Southeast Asian travel bans on women facing executions in the Middle East.



Sabrina Mahtani is a Zambian/British lawyer. She co-founded AdvocAid, an NGO that provides access to justice for women in detention in Sierra Leone. The organisation has freed 6 women on death row. Sabrina formerly worked for Amnesty International and The Elders and currently curates Women Beyond Walls. She is an independent expert on access to justice for women and consults for a variety of organisations.



Professor William Schabas is a specialist on capital punishment, especially on its international legal aspects. His research has addressed the evolving case law of bodies like the European Court of Human Rights, the use of international authorities and precedents in domestic litigation, and factors such as public opinion and global trends in countries that still retain the death penalty. In 2009, he was consultant to the United Nations responsible for preparing the Secretary General's five-yearly report on the status of capital punishment. His new book, *The International Legal Order's Colour Line* (2023), was published by Oxford University Press in September.

DPRU RESEARCH ASSOCIATES (CONT.)



Dr Claudia Stoicescu is an Associate Professor in Public Health at Monash University, Indonesia. She is a social epidemiologist and policy analyst with expertise in HIV, gender-based violence, drug use and drug policy. Her current work examines the impact of policing practices on health outcomes and access to health care among people who use drugs. She advises the DPRU on drug policy in Indonesia and women's experiences with drug trafficking and previously assisted in our research on 'elite' opinions on the death penalty in Indonesia.



Professor Jon Yorke is Professor of Human Rights and the Director of the BCU Centre for Human Rights at Birmingham City University. He is a member of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Pro-Bono Lawyers Panel, in which he advises the British Government on death penalty matters. His current major research focus is on the theory of 'utopia' in international law and his external work now focuses upon the UN's Universal Periodic Review and the filing of Stakeholder Reports in the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

DPRU RESEARCH STUDENTS

Six Oxford DPhil students who are conducting research on death penalty topics are currently affiliated as members of the DPRU:



Amanda Clift-Matthews is a barrister at Doughty Street Chambers, specialising in criminal law and human rights. She was formerly in-house counsel and Legal Director at the Death Penalty Project and has represented at the appellate level individuals facing a death sentence throughout the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, including before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Her research focuses on capital drug trafficking cases in Singapore.



Matthew Goldberg is undertaking his DPhil on prohibition of the death penalty in international law, with a focus on human rights forums at the United Nations and the role of digital methods in the development and realisation of human rights. He is an experienced criminal barrister, has lectured in criminal law at King's College, London, and is a former President of Reprieve Australia. He is currently President of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.



Amelia Inglis' research, funded by the ESRC, explores the experiences of homicide victims' families in the US. She seeks to understand how the protracted capital appeals process and consequent sentence reversals might militate against recovery for those whose defendants are sentenced to death. Her work suggests that, contrary to the assumptions of retentionists, the death penalty does not help families of victims of homicide to recover and to find 'closure'.



Abdul Rashid Ismail is researching the abolition of the death penalty in Malaysia. His research explores the factors that contribute to the movement for abolition in Malaysia and those that militate against abolition. Rashid actively litigates in the Malaysian courts on behalf of death row prisoners and those facing capital charges and has recently represented death sentenced prisoners at resentencing hearings following the abolition of the mandatory death penalty in Malaysia.



Lucrezia Rizzelli is researching punishment for drug offences in Indonesia as part of a collaborative scholarship with the DPP funded by the ESRC. She examines the motivations that lead people to engage in drug crimes and to better understand the role that punishment plays in the decision-making process to challenge the applicability of general deterrence theory in relation to Indonesian couriers and drug traffickers. She has also worked on DPP-DPRU research on death sentenced prisoners in Kenya.



Serene Singh's research focuses on women on death row in the US. Through interviews with death-sentenced women, with their families and with professionals who support women, she explores the gendered pains of this ultimate punishment. She is the founder of The Serenity Project, a non-profit that aims to empower marginalized women survivors through skills-based courses and mentorship programming.

DPRU INTERNS

Since 2018, Oxford Criminology and the DPP have collaborated on Research Internships, with Oxford MSc or DPhil students conducting small death penalty research projects under the joint supervision of Carolyn Hoyle and the DPP's Saul Lehrfreund and Parvais Jabbar.

In the academic year 2022-23, two DPP-Oxford Crim Research Interns from the year's MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice cohort supported the DPRU's research projects:

Francesca Rigg, a part-time student on the MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice, has been helping to write country reports on the death penalty for countries in Asia and the Middle East for the DPRU's 'Mapping Death Row' projects on foreign nationals and drug offending. Francesca also helped to prepare background material for the DPRU's submission on the death penalty for migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the UN Universal Periodic Review process.



Aimee Clesi, a full-time student on the MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice, has been researching abolitionist de facto (ADF) jurisdictions in the United States. She has developed datasets, maps and tables that analyse how 23 US states have abolished the death penalty and the role of ADF status in the abolition process. She has also sought to identify factors that may encourage abolition, or prolong ADF status, among the 27 states of the United States which retain the death penalty.

DPRU IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT

ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN GHANA

In late July 2023, Ghana passed two Parliamentary Bills which abolished capital punishment for all ordinary and military crimes, which were then given formal assent by the President in August.

In achieving abolition, Ghana joined a wave of change sweeping sub-Saharan Africa, with Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone and Zambia all abolishing the death penalty in law over the past five years. It became the 29th country to abolish the death penalty in Africa and the 124th globally.

In collaborative work led by the Death Penalty Project (DPP), Carolyn Hoyle and a small team of international experts – including UK-based Ghanaian academics Dr Kofi Boakye and Dr Justice Tankebe, and John McKendrick KC of the Commonwealth Lawyers Association – had been closely engaged with local partners in the 18 months leading up to Ghana's decision.

The team made visits to Ghana in the period before abolition, drafting a memorandum on the case for abolition and providing advice and guidance to the Ghanaian Parliament's Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, as well as engaging with policymakers, civil society organisations, the Bar Association, religious leaders and the diplomatic community.

In advance of the passing of the Parliamentary Bills, Saul Lehrfreund and Carolyn Hoyle published an article on *The Conversation* making the case for abolition in Ghana, titled 'It's time for Ghana to enshrine its respect for the right to life – by abolishing the death penalty.' This article is available to read online [here](#).



Image: Carolyn Hoyle and the DPP's Saul Lehrfreund meet with the Attorney-General of Ghana, Godfred Yeboah Dame, and members of his delegation.

The DPP also published an interview with Francis-Xavier Sosu MP, who introduced both Bills before Parliament and was a critical advocate for abolition, which can be read [here](#), as well as a press release announcing the passing of the Bills in Parliament which can be read [here](#).

For further details on the road to abolition in Ghana and the roles of the many individuals and organisations the DPRU and the DPP collaborated with in the process, see Carolyn Hoyle and Saul Lehrfreund's blog [here](#).

HARM REDUCTION INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, MELBOURNE

Dealing with Punishment: Risks and Rewards in Indonesia's Illicit Drug Trade

Carolyn Hoyle
with assistance from Arie Rahadi, Lucrezia Rizzelli and Amalia Puri Handayani



In April 2023, Carolyn Hoyle, the DPP's Parvais Jabbar and Awaludin Muzaki of LBH Masyarakat hosted a side event at the 27th Harm Reduction International (HRI) conference in Melbourne, Australia – the largest international conference for public health, human rights and drug policy.

The event focused on the presentation of research exploring the pathways and social and economic motivations of individuals who had entered into the illicit drug trade in Indonesia.

It marked the official launch of the report *Dealing with Punishment: Risks and Rewards in Indonesia's Illicit Drug Trade*, commissioned by DPP in partnership with LBH Masyarakat and authored by Carolyn Hoyle, which is based on interviews with 57 prisoners serving long sentences in prison in Jakarta for serious drug offences.

The *Dealing with Punishment* report can be read [on the DPP website](#).



From left: Carolyn Hoyle, Awaludin Muzaki of LBH Masyarakat and Parvais Jabbar at the Harm Reduction International conference in Melbourne.

ABOLITION ADVOCACY IN TAIWAN

In February 2023, Carolyn Hoyle and the DPP's Saul Lehrfreund visited Taiwan to engage in abolition advocacy with politicians, policymakers and the media, together with their partner organisation Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty (TAEDP).

The primary purpose of the visit was to share the key empirical findings from the DPP and TAEDP's joint report [Legislators' Opinions on the Death Penalty in Taiwan](#), authored by Carolyn Hoyle and Professor Shiow-duan Hawang of Soochow University, which revealed that the majority of Taiwan's legislators would like to see the death penalty abolished.



Image: Carolyn Hoyle and the DPP's Saul Lehrfreund speak at an event during their visit to Taiwan.

During their time in Taiwan, Carolyn and Saul engaged with key political and legal stakeholders, the international community, civil society organisations and the wider public to strengthen advocacy and dialogue on abolition in the country. This included meeting with a group of key stakeholders, including lawyers, to discuss the 38 current death row cases in Taiwan and develop constitutional legal arguments for abolition, as well as visiting the National Human Rights Commission. Carolyn and Saul also published an op-ed article in the *Taipei Times* on 10 February, titled '[Time to scrap capital punishment](#)'.



Image: Carolyn and Saul visit the National Human Rights Commission of Taiwan.

ABOLITION OF THE MANDATORY DEATH PENALTY IN MALAYSIA



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In April, Malaysia's House of Representatives and Senate passed two Bills [abolishing the mandatory death penalty](#) in the country. The effect of this is that the death penalty will no longer be the mandatory (automatic) sentence and judges will have the discretion to consider all the circumstances of a case before deciding on the appropriate sentence.

More than 1,300 people currently under sentence of death in Malaysia will now be entitled to have their sentences reviewed. The passing of the two Bills followed the Malaysian government's announcement in June 2022 that it would abolish the mandatory sentence.

Prior to these developments, the DPP's Parvais Jabbar and Saul Lehrfreund, Carolyn Hoyle and the late Professor Roger Hood had collectively submitted expert testimony for a report on alternative sentencing by a Special Committee advising the Malaysian government.

A DPRU-DPP joint statement setting out the case for the abolition of the mandatory death penalty as a prelude to ending capital punishment, published in February 2022, can be found on the DPRU website [here](#).

SEMINAR BY VISITING FELLOW ANURAG DEVKOTA



In December 2022, Global Criminal Justice Fellow Anurag Devkota, a human rights lawyer based in Kathmandu, Nepal, spent time as a visitor at the Centre for Criminology and delivered a seminar based on his research on migration governance and strategic litigation.

Anurag's seminar, titled '[Strategic litigation and sentence transfers for migrant workers](#)', focused on how his strategic litigation work pushed for progressive reforms to Nepal's labour migration regime, including addressing the plight of Nepali workers in prisons in Gulf states due to lack of legal representation, and the potential for sentence transfer mechanisms based on the ruling of the Supreme Court of Nepal.

Earlier in 2022, Anurag was interviewed as part of the DPRU Blog's interview series on foreign nationals and the death penalty. This Q&A interview can be read on the DPRU Blog [here](#).

ABOLITION ADVOCACY IN ZIMBABWE



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Just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DPP's Parvais Jabbar and Carolyn Hoyle had plans to travel back to Harare for high-level meetings with politicians and policymakers following the enthusiastic response to research published by the DPP: [a report on public opinion](#) in 2018 and another on [the views of opinion leaders](#) in 2020, which included a Foreword by President Mnangagwa, supporting the research findings.

Prohibitions on international travel halted progress and over the past two years efforts have been made to revive the conversation. Returning to Harare in September 2023, the team held a series of meetings and workshops with politicians, activist lawyers, NGOs, researchers and embassies engaged with the government on abolition. Working closely with their partner organisation, [Veritas](#), they are supporting various abolitionist efforts, including Hon Edwin Mushoriwa-Dzivaresekwa MP's attempt to introduce a Private Members' Bill for abolition.

WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY



On 10 October 2023, the DPRU marked the 21st World Day Against the Death Penalty, publishing two new blog posts concerning capital punishment in abolitionist de facto (ADF) states.

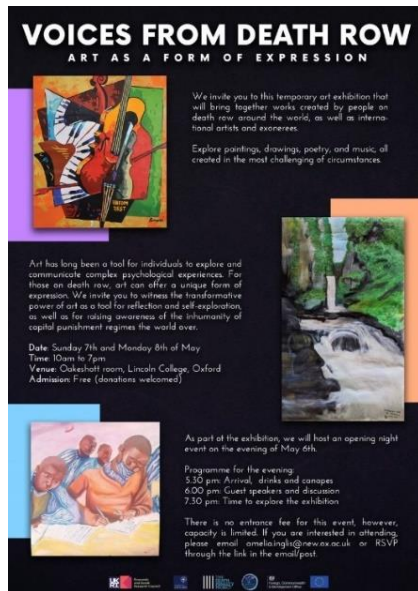
The first, authored by Project Manager Daniel Cullen, introduced the DPRU and the DPP's new research project on ADF status, asking: what prevents ADF states from reaching full abolition of the death penalty? This post can be read on the DPRU Blog [here](#).

The second post, authored by barrister and DPRU DPhil student Amanda Clift-Matthews, focused on Amanda's experiences of assisting prisoners on death row in ADF jurisdictions in Africa and the Caribbean. This post can be read on the DPRU Blog [here](#).

CAROLYN HOYLE INTERVIEWED FOR OXFORD PROFILES

In February, Carolyn Hoyle was featured in the University's *Oxford Profiles* interview series. The interview covered Carolyn's early research on domestic abuse and miscarriages of justice, her path to death penalty research, the genesis of the DPRU, and her current advocacy work in Asia and Africa. The profile can be read on [the University website](#).

'VOICES FROM DEATH ROW' ART EXHIBITION



In May, the DPRU and the DPP held a temporary art exhibition titled 'Voices from Death Row: Art as a Form of Expression', showcasing artworks created by people on death row around the world, as well as professional artists who explored the theme of capital punishment.

Curated by DPRU DPhil students Amelia Inglis and Lucrezia Rizzelli, the exhibition was hosted by Lincoln College Oxford, and included paintings, drawings, poetry, clothing and music - all created in the most challenging of circumstances.

The exhibition aimed to shed light on the inner worlds of individuals seen as beyond redemption by many within society. It also sought to amplify the voices of people on death row, focusing on the human condition, rather than the crimes for which they were sentenced.

An official opening event with guest speakers was held on Saturday 6th May, attended by around 100 people. The speakers were Carolyn Hoyle; Parvais Jabbar of the DPP; Peter Ouko, death row exoneree from Kenya and founder of the charity Crime Si Poa; and Toshi Kazami, a professional photographer who presented his series of images of prisons and inmates from death row. Over the course of the three days, the exhibition was visited by almost 300 people.



Image: The opening night of the 'Voices from Death Row' exhibition at Lincoln College, Oxford.

The exhibition was made possible thanks to funding and support provided by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Oxford Centre for Criminology, the Oxford Student Union, Lincoln College, New College Oxford, Wadham College Oxford, the Death Penalty Project and private donations.

'VOICES FROM DEATH ROW' ART EXHIBITION (CONT.)



Image: Visitors view artworks at the 'Voices from Death Row' exhibition.

Lucrezia and Amelia were shortlisted for the Student Union's 'Paving the Way' award for 'students who have been innovative or original in their approach to activism, campaign and student representation, or who have achieved outstanding results from their efforts.' Amelia was also invited to present on the use of art in the fight for abolition at the Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort and Council of Europe's workshop on 'Advocacy and awareness-raising for the abolition of the death penalty' in Strasbourg earlier this year.

For those who were unable to attend the exhibition, most of the artworks will now be available to view over the coming months at the Tap Social Movement's venue in Botley, Oxford.

WORLD CONGRESS AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY, BERLIN

In November 2022, Carolyn Hoyle, Jocelyn Hutton, Lucy Harry and Daniel Cullen attended the 8th World Congress Against the Death Penalty in Berlin, Germany, which brought together members of the global death penalty abolitionist movement including activists, academics, lawyers, diplomats, politicians, former death row prisoners and victims' families.

The DPRU team gave a presentation on their 'Foreign Nationals on Death Row' interactive database which was launched in August 2023.



Images: The DPRU's Jocelyn Hutton and Lucy Harry present at the World Congress Against the Death Penalty, Berlin, in November 2022.

Death Penalty Research Unit (DPRU), University of Oxford

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The DPRU was established in 2020 with generous funding from Lady Edwina Grosvenor, a philanthropist and committed penal reformer, and has since had success in attracting funding for specific projects.

The DPRU is grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN) and the University of Oxford John Fell Fund as well as the Social Sciences Division, Faculty of Law, and Centre for Criminology for supporting our various research projects.

If you share our vision and ambitions, and would like to help to accelerate death penalty reform, please do get in touch with us to start a conversation.