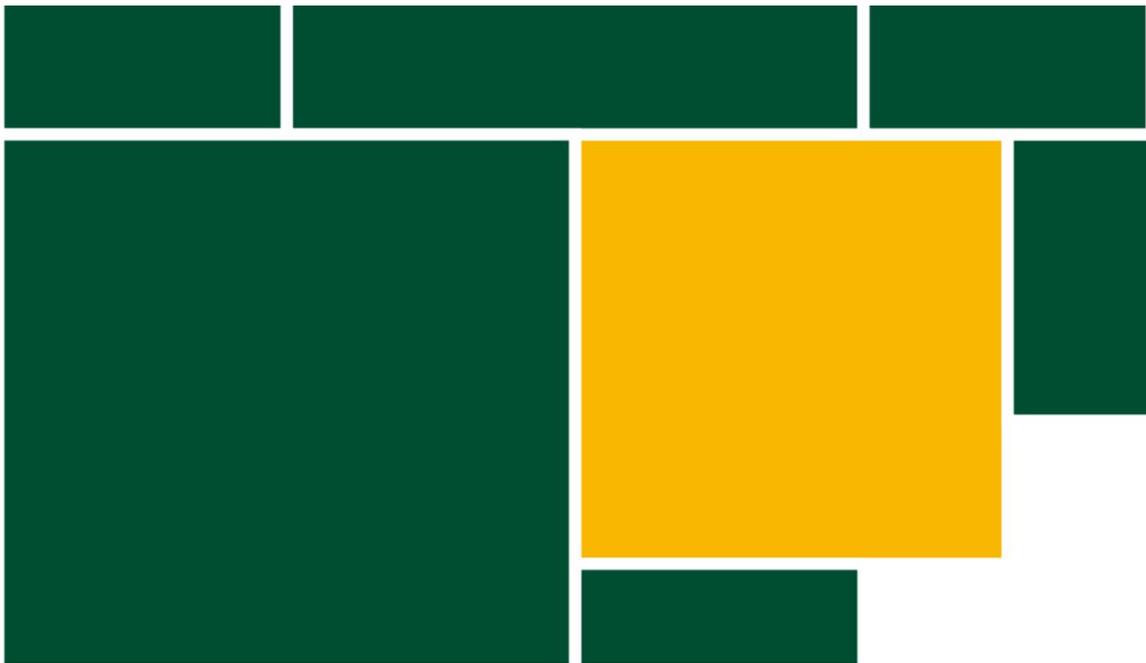




# DEATH PENALTY RESEARCH UNIT (DPRU) ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25



**CENTRE FOR CRIMINOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD**

**MARCH 2026**

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## *DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT*

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The academic year 2024-25 marked the fifth year of the Oxford Death Penalty Research Unit's (DPRU) operations, after its establishment in 2020 through a generous donation from the philanthropist Lady Edwina Grosvenor. Over the past five years, we have worked in close partnership with the Death Penalty Project (DPP) and many other international partners to pursue our core aims: developing new research on the death penalty worldwide; encouraging death penalty scholarship; and engaging in collaborative knowledge production, exchange and dissemination.

We were delighted during 2025 to receive a further contribution of funding from Lady Grosvenor, which will underpin the continued operations of the DPRU over the coming years. This vital support for our work will enable us to further expand both our research agenda and our policy engagement activities, as we pursue our aim of elucidating and challenging the law and practice of capital punishment worldwide, with the explicit aim of its abolition or, failing that, its progressive restriction.

The launch of the present Annual Report arrives as we reach the end of two research projects which have been our focal points over the past three years. In early 2026, the DPRU and the DPP completed our three-year Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded research project on drugs, deterrence and the death penalty in Southeast Asia, which investigated who is on death row for drug offences in Indonesia and the factors that influenced individuals' decision-making in their pathways to offending. In summer 2025, the DPRU and DPP reached the end of our two-year Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN)-funded research project on abolitionist de facto (ADF) status, exploring the death penalty in states which retain the death penalty in law but have not carried out an execution for 10 years or more.

Together with the DPP, we will continue the dissemination of our findings on drug policy in Indonesia and the death penalty under ADF status during the academic year 2025-26 and beyond. In our dissemination work in Indonesia, we will continue to collaborate with our partners at Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia and LBH Masyarakat, whose support was crucial to the success of our empirical research programme over the past three years. For our ongoing work on ADF status, we are grateful to have received a second grant from the OPEN Public Policy Challenge Fund, which will enable us to expand our engagement activities to a range of new audiences among international policymakers.

The end of these two projects has also given us the opportunity to begin exploring new areas of work. Following a visit to Botswana in May 2025, the DPRU and DPP are now working with partner organisation Ditshwanelo – The Botswana Centre for Human Rights and the government to plan a new

study into public opinion on capital punishment and the prospects of abolition. We are also planning a new research programme on the psychological impacts of death sentences in Nigeria, in conjunction with the Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP), supported by a University of Oxford Social Sciences Engagement Fellowship awarded to the DPRU's Dr Lucrezia Rizzelli.

Policy engagement activities remain at the core of the DPRU's work, as we seek to ensure that our research is shared with policymakers and other opinion formers beyond the academic sphere. The 'Impact & Engagement' section of this report presents a sample of the engagement work undertaken by the DPRU team, affiliates and research students during 2024-25. In addition to news and media outputs, during 2025 we held two events during sessions of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, addressing diplomats and civil society representatives on our work on ADF status. The organisation of these events was supported by the Council of Europe and a number of permanent missions of abolitionist member states.

In the most recent example of our engagement work, the DPRU has developed an expert opinion report on terrorism, deterrence and the death penalty in Israel, as part of a pending constitutional challenge before the Supreme Court of Israel. This submission forms part of a response to legislative proposals to reinstate judicial executions in Israel, more than 60 years since its last judicial execution in 1962. At present, Israel is the only country in the Middle East which does not hold prisoners on death row (aside from Turkey, which is abolitionist), and the passing of this legislation – along with any subsequent executions – would represent a significantly regressive step in the country's death penalty policy.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, the latest available statistics from 2024 show executions recorded in a number of states in the region in that year, including sharp rises in numbers of annual executions in Iran (many for drug-related offences), Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Current conflicts and the reporting of mass extrajudicial executions of protesters in Iran have shone a spotlight on human rights abuses and an apparent entrenchment of capital punishment in parts of the region. This contrasts starkly with the ongoing shift towards abolition in sub-Saharan Africa, where there were no executions recorded during 2024 other than in Somalia. In Asia, we find both significant use of executions, including under conditions of state secrecy in China and Vietnam, alongside the adoption of various policies to progressively restrict the use of capital punishment, with several Southeast Asian states now approaching the 10-year threshold for ADF status in the coming years (Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand). We will continue to conduct research and to engage with these countries in Asia and Africa as well as the many ADF countries in the Caribbean to do all we can to support movement away from capital punishment.

*Carolyn Hoyle, 11 March 2026*

## DPRU UPDATES

### RENEWED PARTNERSHIP WITH LADY EDWINA GROSVENOR

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In September 2025, the DPRU was delighted to [announce](#) the renewal of its partnership with justice reformer and philanthropist Lady Edwina Grosvenor.

Lady Grosvenor's philanthropic support enabled the establishment of the DPRU in 2020, including the creation of the role of Project Manager. It helped the DPRU to publish new academic research on the administration of the death penalty and rationales for its retention in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. The renewed partnership will underpin further evidence-based research over the coming years, alongside crucial international engagement on the death penalty, much of it in conjunction with the DPRU's partner organisation, the Death Penalty Project (DPP).

DPRU Director Professor Carolyn Hoyle said: "We are enormously grateful to Lady Edwina Grosvenor for her renewed support of our work in the DPRU. Her generosity will enable us to continue to advance our collaborative research around the world, ensuring our work meaningfully engages with governments, civil society, legal practitioners and individuals facing the death penalty."

Lady Grosvenor said: "The global work of the DPRU is not only exciting but it's also vital. I am so pleased to see the impact they are having in different countries, some of whom have abolished the death penalty and some who are now considering it. This is such important work and progress is being made."

### NEW FUNDING FOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ON NIGERIA

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In December 2025, the DPRU's Dr Lucrezia Rizzelli was awarded a Social Sciences Engagement Fellowship from the University of Oxford's Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) to allow her to develop a new programme of research on punishment for severe crimes in Nigeria (Feb 2026–Jun 2026, £18,334), in conjunction with the DPP.

This collaborative project – building on previous exploratory work in Nigeria carried out by the DPP and DPRU – is intended to provide empirical evidence of the failure of the death penalty to deter serious crimes and of the psychological

harms experienced by those on death row, which could breach the international prohibition against torture. In undertaking their research on Nigeria, the DPRU and the DPP will work closely with the NGO Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP).

Nigeria retains the death penalty for a range of offences, and although no executions have been carried out for nearly a decade, the death row population now stands at almost 3,700. This expanding population lives in overcrowded conditions in constant uncertainty about whether executions might resume, often for years or even decades. The prolonged and acute psychological suffering caused by confinement in such conditions has been termed ‘death row phenomenon.’

While legal arguments based on the concept of death row phenomenon have been successful in restricting capital punishment in many jurisdictions, there is a need for rigorous evidence to support these arguments. In Nigeria, civil society groups and policymakers believe that evidence on the harms of capital punishment could help to shift opinion and facilitate policy change.

As an Engagement Fellow, Lucrezia will work with the DPP to develop a policy-relevant research proposal to address the current evidence gap. The DPRU and DPP have previously worked together to produce policy-relevant empirical research on the death penalty from a number of countries, including studies of death row from Kenya and Indonesia. This project also builds upon the DPRU and DPP’s recent contributions to successful abolition efforts elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, notably Zimbabwe in 2024, Ghana in 2023 and Sierra Leone in 2021.



*Photo: The DPRU's Carolyn Hoyle and the DPP's Saul Lehrfreund visit Nigeria in January 2025*

## ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM OXFORD POLICY ENGAGEMENT NETWORK

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**OPEN**  
OXFORD POLICY  
ENGAGEMENT NETWORK

In December 2025, the DPRU was awarded a second grant from the Oxford Policy Engagement Network (OPEN) (Jan 2026–Jun 2026, £10,700) to support its research on the death penalty in ‘abolitionist de facto’ (ADF) states’ – those that retain the death penalty in law but have not carried out an execution for 10 years or more.

The new project, titled ‘A death penalty without executions: Engaging with international policymakers towards abolition in “abolitionist de facto” states’, builds on research undertaken through the DPRU and the DPP’s first OPEN-funded [research project on ADF status](#), which began in 2023 and was completed in 2025.

The DPRU and DPP’s programme of research on ADF status aims to address a two-fold public policy challenge faced by policymakers in ADF states: the need for a modernised intellectual framework to understand the nature of ADF status, and the need to identify the specific barriers to the transition to full abolition in these states.

This second grant will enable a new programme of work aiming to deepen the impact of our updated intellectual framework by focusing on engagement at the international policy level, working in conjunction with the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP), an alliance of more than 160 NGOs, bar associations, local authorities and unions.

To achieve this, the team intend to facilitate a series of policy engagement events in Oxford, Geneva and Paris during the first half of 2026, engaging with diplomatic representatives of ADF states, policymakers from international institutions and advocates from around the world working towards abolition.

## SHORTLISTING FOR VICE-CHANCELLOR’S AWARDS 2025

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In March 2025, the DPRU’s Carolyn Hoyle and Daniel Cullen, and the DPP’s Parvais Jabbar and Saul Lehrfreund, were delighted to be nominated on one of the shortlists for the [University of Oxford Vice-Chancellor’s Awards 2025](#).

The team were nominated for the ‘Making a Difference Globally Award’, a category recognising those who have made a difference to the lives of those outside the UK through University resources, expertise or insights.



*Photo: The DPP's Parvais Jabbar and Saul Lehrfreund and the DPRU's Carolyn Hoyle and Daniel Cullen at the Vice-Chancellor's Awards 2025*

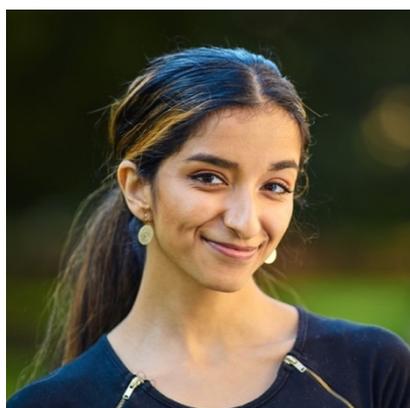
The nomination recognised the team's work over the past decade, alongside various partner organisations, to establish transnational collaborative networks to realise the potential of research, advocacy, legal strategy and engagement to support abolition movements, including in Zimbabwe, Ghana and Sierra Leone, thereby impacting those previously at risk of execution.

As part of the nomination, Carolyn Hoyle and Saul Lehrfreund were invited to present on the DPRU and DPP's work in an Awards Showcase hosted in Blackwell Hall at the Weston Library, on 13 May.

demonstrate and discuss their work with academics and members of the public. Carolyn and Saul's short talk from this event is available to [watch on YouTube](#) (15 mins).

The showcase gave shortlisted nominees an opportunity to

## CELEBRATING DPRU STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS



In December 2025, DPRU research student Serene Singh passed the viva for her DPhil in Criminology at the Centre for Criminology.

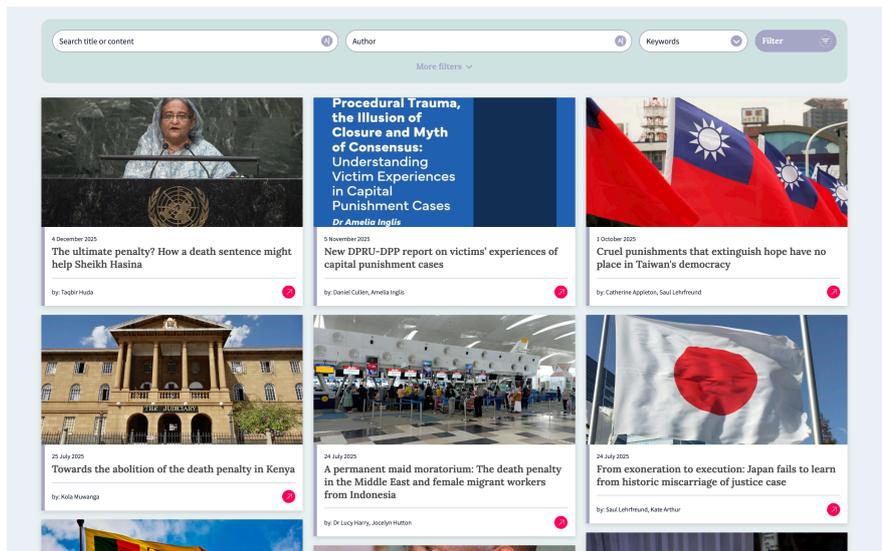
She undertook the first widespread study of the conditions of confinement and prison experiences of the 52 women on death row in the United States.

Her research included interviews and other methods of correspondence with women facing capital punishment and resentenced from death row; close contacts and family members of the women; legal counsel; and experts such as prison wardens, chaplains, and correctional officers.

She found that women on death row experience a 'slow-motion execution' with 'phantom deaths' of their minds, bodies and souls; and that the effects extend to their children and support communities.

## UPDATES ON THE DPRU BLOG

The DPRU Blog has now been active for five 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.



*Photo: A selection of recent posts from the DPRU Blog*

Over the last year, blog posts have covered a wide range of topics and jurisdictions, including the following:

- Daniel Cullen, [‘DPRU Q&As: Takeshi Kaneko, Japan, Lawyer’](#)
- Carolyn Hoyle and Parvais Jabbar, [‘Celebrating abolition in Zimbabwe twenty years after its last execution’](#)
- Saul Lehrfreund and Carolyn Hoyle, [‘Taiwan: The execution of Huang Lin-kai – a cruel and illegal killing’](#)
- Aimee Clesi, [‘Reflections on the persistence of the U.S. federal death penalty’](#)
- Bharat Malkani, [‘Turkish complicity in the Iranian death penalty: The case of Amir Tataloo’](#)
- Lucy Harry, [‘International Women’s Day: Foreign national women and the postcolonial death penalty’](#)
- Lakshmi Menon, [‘Death penalty sentencing in India: The futility of introducing safeguards for an inhuman punishment’](#)
- Simran Chawdhary, [‘Exploring punitive populism and performative justice in India’s trial courts’](#)
- Willis Nandi, [‘A decade on death row in Kenya’](#)
- Anmol Dikshit, [‘Five decades without executions: Sri Lanka’s suspended death penalty’](#)
- Saul Lehrfreund and Kate Arthur, [‘From exoneration to execution: Japan fails to learn from historic miscarriage of justice case’](#)
- Lucy Harry and Jocelyn Hutton, [‘A permanent maid moratorium: The death penalty in the Middle East and female migrant workers from Indonesia’](#)
- Kola Muwanga, [‘Towards the abolition of the death penalty in Kenya’](#)

- Catherine Appleton and Saul Lehrfreund, '[Cruel punishments that extinguish hope have no place in Taiwan's democracy](#)'
- Daniel Cullen and Amelia Inglis, '[New DPRU-DPP report on victims' experiences of capital punishment cases](#)'
- Taqbir Huda, '[The ultimate penalty? How a death sentence might help Sheikh Hasina](#)'

The DPRU Blog continues to welcome new contributions: guidelines for submissions, editorial policies and contact details are available on [the DPRU website](#).

## DPRU RESEARCH PAPER SERIES

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The DPRU Research Paper Series contributes to DPRU's efforts to encourage death penalty scholarship and engagement in knowledge production, exchange and dissemination through articles of around 4,000–5,000 words, drawing on original empirical or library-based research.

During 2025, the DPRU published two new papers in the Research Paper Series:

**DPRU Research Paper No. 7: Gianmarco Bondi, '[Extradition and the death penalty: Perspectives from Italy](#)' (June 2025)**

This Paper examines the 'Italian approach' to the rejection of extradition requests involving the death penalty, based on a reading of key decisions of the Italian higher courts, as developed through recent jurisprudence.

It argues that one of the significant effects of this approach is that 'abolitionist de facto' (ADF) and retentionist states are treated alike, and it proposes that the Italian approach could be seen as a template to be followed by other higher courts worldwide.

**DPRU Research Paper No. 8: Daniel Pascoe and Mai Sato, '[The death penalty, due process violations, murder by decree and extra-legal killings: A typology of "murder by governments"](#)' (September 2025)**

Recent scholarship on the death penalty and harm reduction has explored the relationship between judicial and extrajudicial killings of drug offenders.

Such research tends to presume that a significant legal dividing line is whether or not the defendant's conduct has been judged in a courtroom before execution – but this is not the only way to differentiate between types of state killings carried out by commission.

This Research Paper sets out to legally define the 'death penalty' as against other forms of premeditated state killings, with special attention to drugs cases in East and Southeast Asia.

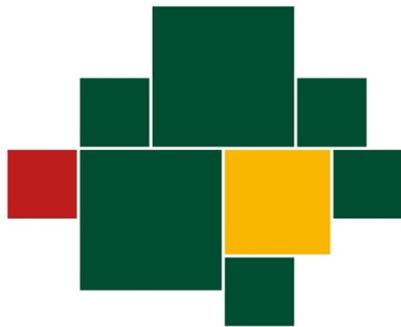
The Editors welcome contributions to the DPRU Research Paper Series from established academics and early career scholars (including doctoral or post-doctoral researchers), as well as civil society, criminal justice and legal professionals who are engaged in research on the death penalty. Author guidelines and editorial policies, are available on [the DPRU website](#).

## DPRU RESEARCH

### LAUNCH OF REPORT ON DEATH PENALTY UNDER ADF STATUS

#### **Between Retention and Abolition:**

Making Sense of a Death Penalty Without Executions



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

THE  
DEATH  
PENALTY  
PROJECT

In September 2025, the DPRU and the DPP launched a new report on ‘abolitionist de facto’ (ADF) countries: those that retain the death penalty in law but have not carried out an execution for 10 years or more.

The report, titled *Between Retention and Abolition: Making Sense of a Death Penalty without Executions*, was the outcome of the DPRU and DPP’s two-year [collaborative research project](#) (2023–25), which examined the concept of ADF status and the challenges faced by policymakers in ADF countries. This project was supported by funding from the Oxford Policy Engagement Network’s (OPEN) Public Policy Challenge Fund and the Council of Europe.

The report marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the ADF category in the UN’s quinquennial reports on the death penalty. Today, 42 states fall into this category.



*Photo: The DPRU’s Daniel Cullen and Carolyn Hoyle and the DPP’s Parvais Jabbar outside the UN headquarters at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, September 2025*

The study draws attention to the potential for de facto abolition to become a destination point, rather than a step on the path towards permanent legal abolition. It acts as a reminder that the absence of executions must not be mistaken for true abolition, and that the ultimate goal remains the eradication of the death penalty in law as well as in practice.

The report was formally launched at an event held during the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, with the sponsorship of the Permanent Missions of Belgium, Benin, Costa Rica, France, Mexico, Mongolia, the Republic of Moldova and Switzerland.

The DPRU's Carolyn Hoyle and Daniel Cullen, and the DPP's Parvais Jabbar, presented the report's principal findings at the event, while opening remarks were provided by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk (by video), and the Director of Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Clare Ovey.



*Photo: The DPRU's Daniel Cullen speaks at the Human Rights Council launch event in September 2025*

The full report is available to read from [the DPP website](#). During 2026, DPRU and DPP will be undertaking further dissemination activities to share the findings with international policymakers, thanks to a further grant generously provided by the OPEN Public Policy Challenge Fund.

## DRUG POLICY RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT IN INDONESIA

Following engagement activities in the region, in January 2026, the DPRU and DPP held a two-day seminar on 'Understanding drug crime, punishment and policy' in Jakarta, Indonesia, together with their local partners and other participants, including from government ministries, civil society organisations and academia.

The event marked the conclusion of the DPRU and DPP's ESRC-funded research project, 'Mapping the political economy of drugs and the death penalty in Southeast Asia' (2022-26), and was organised in conjunction with the human rights organisation Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Masyarakat (LBHM) and Atma Jaya University, Jakarta.



*Photo: Speakers at the DPRU and DPP's drug policy seminar in Jakarta, January 2026*

The ESRC research project sought to test the veracity of assumptions about who is convicted of drug offences and the deterrent effect of the death penalty in Indonesia, with implications for countries with similar laws across the Southeast Asia region, as well as investigating individuals' motivations for and pathways to drug offending.

With data collection assisted by Atma Jaya University, the team conducted two studies: one with those in prison for committing drug offences, who were sentenced to death or to life, and the second with those in the community involved in drug using and trading networks.

For the prison study, interviews were conducted with a representative sample of 233 prisoners, 197 of whom were sentenced to death and 36 serving life sentences, across 10 prisons in Indonesia. They analysed the factors that shaped their decisions to commit drug crimes and why harsh punishments had not deterred them.

In the community, they interviewed 100 individuals, across four regions, who were situated within drug using and trading networks but had not been convicted of serious drug offences in the past three years. Interviewing those in the community was important for understanding the decision-making processes of those who may have resisted involvement in serious offending, or evaded detection.

The findings of this project – which will be published in various outputs over the coming year – have the potential to assist policymakers, practitioners and politicians who want evidence-led penal policy and can be harnessed to encourage debate, challenge rationales for retention, and shift policy and practice.



*Photo: Participants at the first day of the two-day drug policy seminar in Jakarta, January 2026*

## PUBLICATION OF JHRP ARTICLE ON ABOLITION IN ZIMBABWE

JOURNAL OF  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
PRACTICE

In August 2025, the DPRU's Carolyn Hoyle and the DPP's Parvais Jabbar published an article on the abolition of the death penalty in Zimbabwe in the *Journal of Human Rights Practice*.

It reflects on the process leading up to Zimbabwe's abolition in December 2024, which involved legal strategy, capacity building for stakeholders, empirical research and high-level dialogue and advocacy, in collaboration with partners including diplomats, local lawyers, politicians and civil society organisations. It is available to read on an open-access basis via the [Journal of Human Rights Practice](#).

## LAUNCH OF REPORT ON VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT CASES



In September 2025, the DPRU and DPP held an event in London to mark the launch of a new research report by recent Oxford Criminology DPhil graduate Dr Amelia Inglis.

The publication, titled *Procedural Trauma, the Illusion of Closure and Myth of Consensus: Understanding Victim Experiences in Capital Punishment Cases*, builds on Dr Inglis' DPhil research to address the common assertion that death sentences and executions have a unique role in providing healing and 'closure' for the families of murder victims (referred to in the report as 'co-victims'), often raised as a justification for retention of capital punishment.

Dr Inglis' research focused on the experiences of the families of murder victims in the United States, where the criminal justice and appellate process in capital cases generally lasts for several years, if not for decades. She conducted 34 in-depth interviews with co-victims and those with relevant professional experience, providing an important original empirical contribution to the field of death penalty scholarship.

At the launch event, Dr Inglis shared the findings of her report in conversation with DPRU Director Professor Carolyn Hoyle, before a Q&A moderated by the DPP's Saul Lehrfreund. Dr Inglis' *Procedural Trauma* report is available to read on [the DPP website](#).



Photo: The DPRU's Carolyn Hoyle, Dr Amelia Inglis and the DPP's Saul Lehrfreund at the launch event

## ODA REPORT ON SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS AND DRUG POLICY



In March 2025, the DPRU published a new research report on the relationship between socioeconomic disadvantage and drug policy in Indonesia, authored by Daniel Cullen and Carolyn Hoyle. It responds to a crisis of prison overcrowding caused by harsh penal policies for drugs.

With support from the University of Oxford's internal Official Development Assistance (ODA) fund, the DPRU, in partnership with the Indonesian legal organisation LBH Masyarakat, conducted interviews with a number of Indonesian civil society organisations working on drug policy and supporting drug offenders and analysed case studies. The project also drew on data from a study of prisoners serving sentences for drug offences conducted in collaboration with Atma Jaya University and the DPP.

The report examines pathways to criminalisation for drug offences and seeks to address a knowledge gap regarding the socioeconomic impacts of Indonesia's current punitive approach to drug policy. In so doing, it complements the wider programme of research undertaken by the DPRU and the DPP on drug policy and deterrence in Indonesia (detailed on p12–13 above).

The full report, *The role of socioeconomic factors in Indonesia's punitive drug policy regime* (2025), and the executive summary are available on [the DPRU website](#).

## HJ CJ ARTICLE ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN MALAYSIA

In February 2026, Carolyn Hoyle and Lucy Harry published an article in the *Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, titled 'Hierarchical citizenship and racialised discretion: Police and consular officers' handling of capital cases in Malaysia'.

The article examined the death penalty in Malaysia, where foreign nationals have historically been sentenced to death at a disproportionately high rate. Using data from 49 interviews with criminal justice professionals and officials at consulates in Kuala Lumpur and a review of 77 court judgments, the authors found that foreign nationals are not equally disadvantaged.

Some consulates are notified in a timely fashion of the arrest of a national for a capital offence; others are not, and the level of assistance provided by consulates to their citizens varies considerably. The article utilised border criminological theorising on 'hierarchical citizenship' and 'racialised discretion' to understand these discriminatory differences.

Carolyn and Lucy's article is available online on an open-access basis from [the Howard Journal of Crime and Justice](#).

## TIJRJ ARTICLE ON RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAMMES IN INDONESIA

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In January 2026, Daniel Cullen and Carolyn Hoyle published an article on drug offending in Indonesia in *The International Journal of Restorative Justice*.

Titled 'Restorative justice for drug crime in Indonesia: Prison by any other name', it addressed the adoption of 'restorative justice' programmes in Indonesia through drug treatment centres, which are intended to reduce drug use and prison overcrowding through compulsory treatment.

Drawing on extensive interviews with representatives of civil society organisations and professionals working in the criminal justice system, the article examined the process from assessment and referral through to treatment. It concluded that there was little evidence of practices that could be recognised as restorative justice: those who offend have little or no control over the diversion process or their treatment, which is characterised by inadequate due process protections, lack of independent oversight and abusive practices. Rather than restorative processes involving communities harmed by offending, this punitive, offender-focused model effectively constitutes another form of incarceration.

The article is available on an open-access basis from [The International Journal of Restorative Justice](#).

## IJDP ARTICLE ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN INDONESIA

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In January 2026, the DPRU's Carolyn Hoyle and Research Associate Dr Lucy Harry published a new article on the death penalty in Indonesia in the *International Journal of Drug Policy*.

The article, titled 'Necropolitics and state-sponsored drug violence: The death penalty for drug offences in Indonesia' is based on data from interviews and focus groups with high-level judges, prosecutors, narcotics police and other police officers in Jakarta, from 2023 to 2024.

The concept of a 'drugs emergency' and protection of the people is used to justify punitive criminal justice responses, judicial and extrajudicial executions of drug traffickers, and disproportionate use of judicial executions against foreign nationals.

The authors found that, contrary to contemporary theories focusing on violence *within* drug markets, in the Indonesian context drug-related violence was primarily enacted by the state against civilians, situating punishment as part of the continuum of drug-related violence rather than simply a matter of penal policy.

Lucy and Carolyn's article is available online on an open-access basis from the *International Journal of Drug Policy* [via ScienceDirect](#).

## BOOK CHAPTER ON PATHWAYS TO DRUG OFFENDING IN INDONESIA

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In July 2025, the DPRU's Carolyn Hoyle and the DPP's Parvais Jabbar contributed a chapter on drug offending in Indonesia to a new edited volume, *Capital Drug Laws in Asia* (Cambridge University Press 2025), edited by Wing-Cheong Chan, Mai Sato and Michael Hor.

Drawing on interviews with people convicted of drug offences, the authors found that while most offenders have economic motivations for entry into the drug trade, personal and relational motivations must not be ignored. In particular, in making decisions about participation in the drug trade, participants were clearly influenced by trusted peer groups.

## DPRU MEMBERS

### DPRU STAFF

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**Carolyn Hoyle**, Director of the DPRU and Professor of Criminology, has been researching and teaching on the death penalty for 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 'A death penalty without executions: Engaging with international policymakers towards abolition in "abolitionist de facto" states' (2026). He also holds the role of Managing Editor of the DPRU Blog and the DPRU Research Paper Series. He is currently completing the Bar training course as a Major Scholar of the Inner Temple.



**Dr Lucrezia Rizzelli** is a Social Science Engagement Fellow in the DPRU, where she is working cooperatively with the Death Penalty Project and the Legal Defence Assistance Project to conduct a study of Nigerian death row inmates, looking into their socio-economic status, decision-making processes and mental wellbeing. She is also a British Academy/Leverhulme Small Grant holder, investigating personal beliefs towards agency and financial deprivation in Southeast Asia. She recently finished her work as Research Officer for the project 'Mapping the Political Economy of Drugs and the Death Penalty in Southeast Asia' (2022-25).

## DPRU PARTNERS

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[Parvais Jabbar](#) is Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of the Death Penalty Project and Visiting Professor of Practice at the University of Oxford Faculty of Law. 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, Visiting Professor of Law at the University of Reading and Honorary Professor of Law at the University of Bristol. 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

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**Dr Sherif Azer** is an Egyptian human rights activist and a Research Associate with the DPRU working on the death penalty in Egypt. Since 2019, he has been the Director of Programmes at the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms ECRF, with specialised focus on minority rights, death penalty, freedom of expression, and support of human rights defenders. He is also a teacher of international refugee law and international human rights law at the American University in Cairo.



[Dr Ron Dudai](#) is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Ben-Gurion University. His work has been published in leading journals including the *British Journal of Sociology*, *British Journal of Criminology*, *Law & Social Inquiry* and *Punishment & Society*. His monograph [\*Penalty in the Underground: The IRA's Pursuit of Informers\*](#) (2022) was published by Oxford University Press.

## DPRU RESEARCH ASSOCIATES (CONT.)



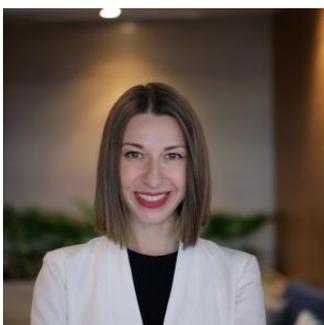
[Dr Lucy Harry](#) is an Assistant Professor of Law and Society in the Department of Sociology at the University of Calgary and a Research Associate in the DPRU. Her research focuses on the intersections between the death penalty, gender, migration and drug policy. Her first book, focused on cases of foreign national women sentenced to death for drug trafficking in Malaysia, is under contract with Routledge.



**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 six 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.



[Dr Claudia Stoicescu](#) is a Research Associate in the Centre for Criminology and 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.



[Professor Jon Yorke](#) is Professor of Human Rights and the Director of the 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 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 INTERNS AND RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

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Since 2018, the DPRU and the DPP have collaborated on Research Internships, with Oxford Criminology MSc or DPhil students conducting small death penalty research projects.

In the academic year 2024-25, the DPRU-DPP Research Interns were **Bernice Chen**, **Elena Borhoata Cucu** and **Alexa Crowe**, who supported the DPRU and DPP's research project on abolitionist de facto (ADF) states.

In 2025, **Sophia Bosworth-Gerbino** was the DPRU's Summer Research Intern. Sophia researched and drafted country profiles for the DPRU and DPP's mapping website of ADF states.

During the 2024-25 academic year, the DPRU's research projects were also supported by the work of three Research Assistants: **Olivia Gauvin**, **Taqbir Huda** and **Adam Kluge**.

## DPRU RESEARCH STUDENTS

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



**Aimee Clesi** is a DPhil candidate focusing on judicial and legislative paths to abolishing the death penalty in the United States. Her research explores the contingent nature of the death penalty, its entrenchment and interpretation under the Eighth Amendment, and its localisation to the American South, where she plans to practice law. She has worked throughout the judiciary in Florida, including at the state Supreme Court and federal trial court, and recently completed a visiting fellowship at Northeastern Law School's Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project.



**Amanda Clift-Matthews** is a practising barrister specialising in criminal law and human rights, with a particular emphasis on capital cases and miscarriages of justice. She was formerly in-house counsel and Legal Director at the Death Penalty Project and has represented individuals facing a death sentence at the appellate level throughout the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, including before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. She is a co-author of '[Sentencing in Capital Cases](#)' (2018) and was shortlisted for the 'Employed Barrister of the Year' award by the Bar Council in 2020. Her DPhil research focuses on capital drug trafficking cases in Singapore.



**Matthew Goldberg** is President of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty and a DPhil candidate researching the prohibition of the death penalty in international law, with a focus on human rights forums at the United Nations. He is an experienced criminal barrister, has lectured in criminal law at King's College, London, and is a former president of Reprive Australia.

## DPRU RESEARCH STUDENTS (CONT.)



[Ayan Gupta](#) is a DPhil candidate in Law researching the introduction and use of life imprisonment without parole (LWOP) in India, which has been introduced as a purportedly more ‘humane’ alternative to the death penalty. He completed the Bachelor of Civil Law (BCL) at Oxford after graduating from the National Law University, Delhi. He was previously a Death Penalty Research Fellow at Project 39A, India.



[Abdul Rashid Ismail](#) is undertaking DPhil research on the abolition of the death penalty in Malaysia. Rashid actively litigates in the Malaysian courts on behalf of death row prisoners and those facing capital charges. He has been and continues to be involved in landmark constitutional cases involving the mandatory death sentence, the rights to a fair trial and the rights of the vulnerable including the mentally ill facing execution. His research explores the factors that contribute to the movement for abolition in Malaysia and those that militate against abolition.



[Kaya Mercer](#) is an MPhil candidate in Criminology, researching death penalty abolition in Chad, Congo-Brazzaville and the Central African Republic. Her research aims to understand and learn from different ‘pathways’ to abolition in French-speaking African countries. She has an interdisciplinary background in liberal arts, with a focus on criminology and human rights, and graduated from the MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice at Oxford, completing her dissertation on the topic of the symbolic power of the death penalty.



[Neetika Vishwanath](#) is a DPhil candidate in Criminology, undertaking an ethnography of decision-making and discretion in India’s criminal courts tasked exclusively with adjudicating cases under the country’s special legislation against sexual offences against children. This legislation includes provisions for the death penalty as a possible punishment for aggravated forms of non-homicidal child rape. Trained as a lawyer in India, Neetika holds graduate degrees in law and women’s studies from Harvard Law School and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, respectively.

## DPRU IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT

### PLANNED ENGAGEMENT WORK IN BOTSWANA

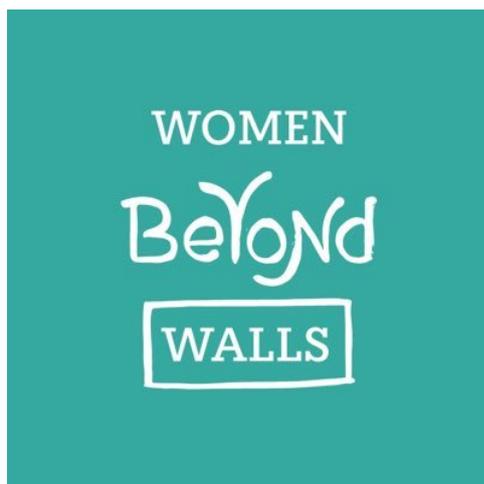


With support from the British High Commission, Carolyn Hoyle and Parvais Jabbar visited Gaborone, Botswana, in May 2025 for meetings with government, the judiciary, heads of criminal justice agencies, diplomats, lawyers and civil society organisations.

Discussions focused on the retention and administration of capital punishment and prospects for abolition. Direct engagement with the public was facilitated by an appearance on a popular radio show, the 'Breakfast in HD' show on Gabz FM.

The DPP and DPRU are now working with partner organisation, Ditshwanelo–The Botswana Centre for Human Rights and the government to plan public opinion research.

### SABRINA MAHTANI WRITES FOR *THE GUARDIAN* ON INCARCERATION OF WOMEN



In December 2025, DPRU Research Associate Sabrina Mahtani published an op-ed with *The Guardian* on the criminalisation and imprisonment of women.

The article – “Bad girls” is how society labels women in prison. But what if that label is a lie? – drew on research with the organisations Women Beyond Walls and Penal Reform International to provide case studies of incarcerated women from around the world.

Mahtani found that “in most cases women are criminalised due to poverty, mental illness, abuse or discrimination.” She described the impacts of maternal incarceration on children – the ‘invisible victims’ – for an estimated 1.4 million children who have a mother in prison.

Sabrina’s op-ed can be read on [The Guardian website](#). Her longer report examining laws and practices that criminalise women due to poverty or status worldwide can be read in full on [the Women Beyond Walls website](#).

## CAROLYN HOYLE APPEARS ON ABC RADIO NATIONAL, AUSTRALIA

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In February 2025, DPRU Director Carolyn Hoyle appeared on the 'Sunday Extra' show on Australia's ABC Radio National to discuss the abolition of the death penalty in Zimbabwe in December 2024.

The interview addressed the history of capital punishment in Zimbabwe, the country's 'abolitionist de facto' status prior to full abolition, the movement to achieve abolition and the research conducted by the DPRU and the DPP during the abolition process.

Carolyn's interview (22 minutes) can be heard on [the ABC Radio National website](#).

## CAROLYN HOYLE WRITES FOR *UNHERD* ON DEATH PENALTY DISCOURSE IN THE UK

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In January 2025, Carolyn Hoyle published an opinion piece on the news website *Unherd*, responding to calls from some political figures to reinstate the death penalty in response to the case of Axel Rudakubana.

Rudakubana was sentenced to a minimum term of 52 years' imprisonment for the murders of three young girls at a dance class in Southport, Merseyside, in July 2024.

The article, titled 'Don't bring back the death penalty for Axel Rudakubana', reflected on the history of the abolition of capital punishment in the UK and the growing movement for global abolition in the decades that have followed. It argued that not only would reinstating the death penalty fly in the face of this international shift, but that it would be deeply unpopular.

Carolyn's article can be read in full [on the \*Unherd\* website](#).

## RON DUDAI ADVOCACY AGAINST DEATH PENALTY BILL IN ISRAEL

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In November 2025, DPRU Research Associate Dr Ron Dudai (Associate Professor at Ben-Gurion University, Israel) published an article with the online publication *+972 Magazine*, addressing new legislative proposals to reinstate judicial executions in Israel.

Titled 'Why the death penalty would cement the Israeli radical right's ascendancy', the article noted that the bill "creates a new capital offence, makes the death penalty mandatory under vaguely defined conditions, and eliminates judicial discretion altogether." Reviewing the history of Israel's death penalty laws, Ron described the proposals as "a transformation that reaches far beyond the death penalty itself – one that is likely to reshape Israeli policy, governance, and political culture."

His article can be read in full on [the \*+972 Magazine\* website](#). Ron also recorded a short video for the Academics for Peace network, providing context on the legislative proposals, which can be [viewed on YouTube](#).

## AIMEE CLESI ATTENDS EVENT WITH U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

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In October 2025, DPRU DPhil student Aimee Clesi was invited to attend a guest lecture by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett, hosted by the Center for the Constitution at the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C.

At the event, Justice Barrett discussed her new book, *Listening to the Law*, which examines judicial restraint and textual fidelity in constitutional interpretation, ideas that Aimee engages with in her DPhil.



*Photo: Aimee Clesi speaks at an event hosted by the Faith and Politics Institute*

Aimee was able to discuss her research objectives with leading constitutional scholars and practitioners, whose perspectives on federalism, originalism, and judicial authority can inform her analysis of the potential role of Congress in achieving abolition in the U.S.

During 2025, Aimee also graduated from the Faith and Politics Institute's John Robert Lewis Fellowship, a 12-month programme designed to support graduate students to engage with the nonviolent philosophy of the late civil rights activist and politician John Robert Lewis (1940-2020).

## DPRU AND DPP HOST SIDE EVENT AT UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

In February 2025, the DPRU and the DPP hosted a side event at the United Nations in Geneva, during the opening week of the 58<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council, to engage with diplomats and civil society representatives on the enduring nature of the death penalty under ‘abolitionist de facto’ (ADF) status.

The event featured contributions from Carolyn Hoyle, Daniel Cullen and Parvais Jabbar, alongside Professor William Schabas, Professor of International Law at Middlesex University and Research Associate in the Centre for Criminology.

Opening remarks were given by Régine Gachoud, Head of Human Rights Diplomacy at the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and closing remarks by Simon Walker, Chief of the Rule of Law and Democracy section, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.



*Photo: DPRU Research Associate Professor William Schabas, the DPP’s Parvais Jabbar and the DPRU’s Carolyn Hoyle and Daniel Cullen speak at the UN side event in February 2025*

The event was formally co-sponsored by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council of Europe, and the permanent missions of Benin, Belgium, Costa Rica, France, Mongolia, Mexico, Moldova and Switzerland.

See further: *Between Retention and Abolition: Making Sense of a Death Penalty Without Executions*, now available from [the DPP website](#).

The DPP and the DPRU also delivered a joint oral statement during the Human Rights Council session, in response to the biennial high-level panel on the death penalty. The statement discussed the role of the judiciary in developing progressive restrictions on the use of capital punishment, as well as highlighting the important role of political actors in achieving abolition, especially in ADF states. The statement is available to read on [the DPP website](#).

