



# DEATH PENALTY RESEARCH UNIT (DPRU) ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22



CENTRE FOR CRIMINOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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## ***DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT***

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In the month we celebrate World Day Against the Death Penalty, our Annual Report for the academic year 2021-2022 reflects on the small contributions made by the Death Penalty Research Unit (DPRU) to global knowledge and engagement on capital punishment, particularly in the Asian and African countries we work in with The Death Penalty Project UK (DPP).

The DPRU was established in 2020 to develop theoretical, empirical, and policy-relevant research on the death penalty and to produce and disseminate knowledge in cooperation with civil society, charities, legal practitioners, and local academics in countries where research is ongoing. These goals have been at the forefront of our efforts since then.



**Professor Carolyn Hoyle,  
Director of the DPRU**

This past year, we have continued our successful partnership with The Death Penalty Project, collaborating on research on the death penalty in Kenya, where the DPP developed a programme of work in partnership with the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, and starting exciting new research on drugs, deterrence, and the death penalty in Southeast Asia.

Having assisted the DPP, Advocaid and civil society in Sierra Leone in 2021 to help to bring about abolition, this year, the DPP and DPRU focused our efforts on working with local Ghanaian CSOs, particularly Amnesty International Ghana, in supporting a Private Members' Bill aimed at abolishing the death penalty for ordinary crimes in Ghana.

We have published articles, reports and other outputs for academic and non-academic audiences; our work has been covered in national media in various countries, including Kenya, Ghana, and Taiwan; and we have presented our research to audiences in Bangladesh, Kenya, and Indonesia.

Our blog, edited by Research Officer Daniel Cullen, is now established as an engaging and reliable source of data, news, and opinions on the death penalty, with contributions from around the world and a wide impact on IGOs, NGOs and the academy. I'm particularly proud of the DPRU Q&A series produced by Research Officer Jocelyn Hutton, presenting interviews with death penalty experts with a focus on those working to support foreign nationals at risk of capital punishment.

Our student members continue to produce excellent research on countries in Africa, Asia, as well as projects on the US, demonstrating a commitment to influencing policy and practice on capital punishment. MSc research interns have assisted our 'Mapping Death Row for Foreign Nationals' project, which we will launch at the '8<sup>th</sup> World Congress against the Death Penalty' in Berlin in November 2022. Building on the success of this model, we are now beginning a new project on 'Mapping Death Row for Drug Offenders' in Asia and the Middle East.

One of our key goals is to inform discourse and policy in those countries we work in with the explicit ambition of assisting abolitionist efforts. The past year has seen abolition in [Equatorial Guinea](#) in September 2022; [Central African Republic](#) in June 2022; and [Papua New Guinea](#) in January 2022. Change has been most prominent in Africa and a recent [Presidential announcement in Zambia](#), though subject to legislation through Parliament, suggests it may join the abolitionist world very soon. Further steps towards full abolition are [seemingly underway in Liberia](#), an abolitionist *de facto* (ADF) country, with a Bill passed by Senate now awaiting approval by House of Representatives.

The DPP and DPRU continue to use their research in Zimbabwe and Kenya – also ADF countries – to inform debate and assist human rights organisations aiming for abolition in law, an issue we explored at a recent DPRU-DPP seminar on abolition in ADF countries on 12 October.

While there are promising signs in Africa, Asia continues to pose challenges to the abolitionist cause. Over the past year, [Singapore](#) resumed executions after a brief hiatus and executions resumed in [Myanmar](#) in July 2022 for the first time since the 1980s.

Parvais Jabbar (DPP) and I are co-investigators on a new three-year, ESRC-funded project to research drugs, the death penalty, and deterrence in Southeast Asia, where the death penalty is applied to a range of drug trafficking offences in many countries. Working with Lucy Harry, Jocelyn Hutton, and Daniel Cullen, we hope that our developing programme of 'Mapping' research across the region, and our focused deterrence studies within Indonesia, will challenge deterrence as a key rationale for the death penalty for drug offences.

Our work at the DPRU has been supported throughout the year by faculty and administrators at the Centre for Criminology, in Oxford's Faculty of Law. I couldn't wish for more supportive colleagues and more engaged students or a better research team. Finally, with my partners at the DPP, I want to thank the academics and NGOs we have worked with in Indonesia, Kenya, Taiwan, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, and Ghana, as well as the many organisations across Asia and the Middle East who have supported our Mapping Death Row projects.

*Carolyn Hoyle, October 2022*

## *DPRU UPDATES*

### FUNDRAISING FOR NEW RESEARCH

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#### *New funding awards*

Over the past year, the DPRU has been successful in applying for new funding for its research activities from a number of sources. The DPRU was awarded a grant from the UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) Strategic Priorities Fund (£26,000) to work with international partners to develop dissemination strategies for reaching wider audiences in civil society and to ensure that its research in Indonesia and Zimbabwe could influence policymakers.

The DPRU received new funding from a University of Oxford Social Sciences Engagement Fellowship (£18,948) to further develop engagement activities and new collaborative relationships, particularly with NGOs in the Middle East; an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) award (£9,841) to continue to develop the DPRU's mapping project on foreign nationals on death row in Asia and the Middle East; and a Faculty of Law Internet Engagement Fund award (£4,900) to produce a new Q&A series on the DPRU Blog interviewing experts on issues facing foreign nationals at risk of capital punishment.

#### *Economic and Social Research Council project grant*

Most notably, together with Parvais Jabbar of the Death Penalty Project (DPP), the DPRU was successful in applying for an ESRC Open Grant in May 2022 (£914,000). This funding has facilitated the establishment of a new research project, 'Mapping the Political Economy of Drugs and the Death Penalty in Southeast Asia' (2022-25).

The new ESRC project will fund a study of 200 people sentenced to death for drug offences in prisons across Indonesia, and 100 of those similarly situated within drug using and trading communities who have not been convicted of serious drug crimes, to study the extent of any deterrent effect from the death penalty for drug offences.

This research builds on a pilot study of 57 prisoners convicted of drug offences in a prison in Jakarta carried out in 2021, commissioned by the DPP and funded by the European Commission, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the University of Oxford's John Fell Fund, in collaboration with Atma Jaya University (for further details see the DPRU Research section later in this report).

#### *University of Oxford John Fell Fund*

The DPRU was also successful in applying for a grant from the University of Oxford John Fell Fund (£54,211). This funding will enable further research into drug offending and the death penalty in the Middle East. Together with the funding from the new ESRC project, this grant will facilitate the creation of a new interactive database as part of the DPRU's 'Mapping Death Row' project which will explore the political economy of drugs in certain Middle Eastern jurisdictions.

## MAPPING PROJECT

The DPRU’s Mapping Death Row project on Foreign Nationals at Risk of Capital Punishment in Asia and the Middle East, funded by the ESRC and overseen by Research Officer Jocelyn Hutton, has continued to grow over the past year.

The project’s interactive database, developed in collaboration with HURIDOCS (an NGO that helps human rights organisations gather, organise and present data for social good) will be launched at the 8<sup>th</sup> World Congress against the Death Penalty in Berlin in November 2022, presenting data from over 1,000 cases of foreign nationals sentenced to death.



The work of the Mapping Death row project has been assisted by DPRU Research Interns for the 2021-22 academic year, all of whom were graduate students on the Oxford MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice programme: Charlotte Daintith, Julia Udell, Karan Tripathi, Preeti Pratishruti Dash, Rhea Singh, Rhea Wakim, and Valencia Scott.

Together the team have been working on the production of Country Reports, Case Study Reports, Blog posts and in-depth thematic reports on a large number of jurisdictions and issues covered by the project. Two additional Research Assistants also provided specialist language skills in Farsi and Arabic for the project during the 2021-22 academic year.



Image: Screenshot from the Mapping Project homepage.

## DPRU BLOG

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The DPRU Blog has now been active since January 2021, 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 Blog's publications from the last year have covered a wide range of jurisdictions worldwide, including: [a post from Daniel Pascoe and Andrew Novak](#) on retention of the death penalty in Tonga; [a three-part series from Professor Jon Yorke](#) on the death penalty in Papua New Guinea; [a post on the experiences of death row prisoners in India](#) from Project 39A's Baljeet Kaur; and [a post from Professor Bin Liang](#) on views on capital punishment among Chinese internet users.

Other Blog publications in the past year have included [a post from Ron Dudai](#) on the resilience of treason as a capital offence; [a post from DPRU Research Officer Daniel Cullen](#) on the international law of consular assistance for foreign nationals facing the death penalty; and [a post on 'death row phenomenon'](#) co-authored by Oxford MSc Criminology and Criminal Justice student Julia Udell and Lyle C. May, a journalist who is currently incarcerated on death row in North Carolina.

The Blog's most read post to date is barrister Naima Asif's [introduction to sharia law and the death penalty](#), which has had over 13,000 unique readers in the past year. The DPRU Blog continues to welcome new contributions: guidelines for submissions, editorial policies, and contact details are available [here](#).

### *Q&A interview series with death penalty experts*

During 2022, the DPRU Blog extended its Q&A series with death penalty experts, thanks to additional funding from the Faculty of Law Internet Engagement Fund which allowed Jocelyn Hutton to undertake a series of new interviews on foreign nationals and the death penalty.

DPRU Q&As: Dr Qadeer Alam, Assistant Inspector General of Prisons,  
Punjab, Pakistan

30 August 2022  
by Qadeer Alam



DPRU Q&As: Ajeng Larasati, Harm Reduction International

28 July 2022  
by Ajeng Larasati



DPRU Q&As: Dr Lucy Harry, DPRU Postdoctoral Researcher

13 July 2022  
by Lucy Harry



DPRU Q&As: Sarah Belal, Executive Director of Justice Project Pakistan

6 July 2022  
by Sarah Belal



Still racist, arbitrary and unfair: the death penalty in Georgia 50 years  
after Furman

29 June 2022  
by David Rose



*Image: A selection of articles from the DPRU Blog homepage.*

*Q&A interview series with death penalty experts (cont.)*

The DPRU Blog published the following new Q&A interviews as part of this series:

- [Dr Qadeer Alam, Assistant Inspector General of Prisons, Punjab, Pakistan](#)
- [Ajeng Larasati, Human Rights Lead, Harm Reduction International](#)
- [Dr Lucy Harry, Postdoctoral Researcher, Death Penalty Research Unit](#)
- [Sarah Belal, Executive Director, Justice Project Pakistan](#)
- [Michael H Fox, Anti-Death Penalty Advocate in Japan](#)
- [Duaa Dhainy, Researcher, European Saudi Organization for Human Rights](#)
- [Anurag Devkota, Human Rights Lawyer, Law and Policy Forum for Social Justice Nepal](#)
- [Kirsten Han, Anti-Death Penalty Advocate and Journalist in Singapore](#)

*50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Furman v. Georgia decision*

On 29 July 2022, the DPRU Blog published two posts to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US Supreme Court decision in *Furman v. Georgia* (1972), which resulted in a brief moratorium on executions across the US. In this landmark decision, the Court declared states' death penalty laws unconstitutional, halting executions until 1977.

### Still racist, arbitrary and unfair: the death penalty in Georgia 50 years after Furman

29 June 2022

by David Rose



### Fifty Years of a Broken System: The US Death Penalty at the 50th Anniversary of Furman v. Georgia

29 June 2022

by Frank Baumgartner



*Image: Two DPRU Blog posts marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Furman v. Georgia decision*

In [the first post for the anniversary](#), Professor Frank Baumgartner reflected on the impacts of the *Furman* decision and problems arising from the new death penalty regime instituted after the Supreme Court's decision in *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976), which permitted executions under new laws.

In [the second post](#), author and journalist David Rose wrote about his involvement in the case of Carlton Gary in Georgia, and argued that the safeguards introduced after 1976 have failed, resulting in a system which is still racist, arbitrary, and unfair.

## 'CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN ADF COUNTRIES' SEMINAR

In October 2022, the DPRU and the DPP hosted an informal seminar at the Centre for Criminology on 'Capital punishment in abolitionist *de facto* (ADF) countries' – those which retain the death penalty in law, without executing prisoners for at least 10 years – to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> World Day Against the Death Penalty. The seminar featured presentations from Carolyn Hoyle, Parvais Jabbar and Saul Lehrfreund (DPP), Professor William Schabas (Middlesex University), and Dr Ron Dudai (Ben Gurion University, Israel).

Notwithstanding global and regional trends towards abolition and declining death sentences and executions, there are over 40 countries still classified as ADF. In ADF countries, including in Africa, Asia and the English-speaking Caribbean, people are sentenced to death each year (with some offences attracting a mandatory death penalty) contrary to their international obligations under international and regional human rights treaties.



*Image: Ron Dudai presents at the ADF seminar.*

Abolitionist efforts are typically directed at actively retentionist countries, with many at risk of execution. It may be assumed that ADF countries almost never return to executions and can be ignored, or that they are on an inevitable road to abolition *de jure*. Recent executions in Myanmar, after over 30 years, and the threat of resumption of executions in the Caribbean, where some countries have been ADF for over 40 years, demonstrate the dangers of such assumptions; as politics shift, the death penalty can be revived and in many ADF countries, the death penalty seems entrenched.

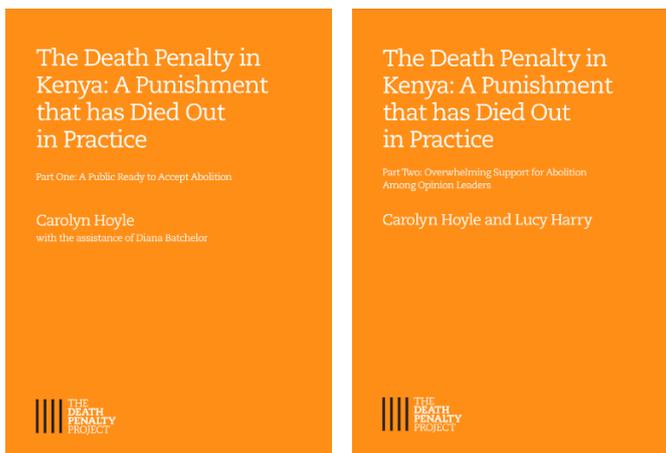
The seminar considered the rationale for, and symbolic functions performed by retention without executions; asked why academics have largely ignored ADF countries; and explored the challenges in breaking through political inertia and entrenched assumptions about support for retention.

## DPRU RESEARCH

### KENYA OPINION RESEARCH

In June 2022, the DPRU and its partners The Death Penalty Project and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) produced a new two-part study examining attitudes to the death penalty in Kenya, titled *The Death Penalty in Kenya: A Punishment that has Died Out in Practice*.

Kenya is an abolitionist de facto country, having not carried out an execution for 35 years. While the application of capital punishment has been restricted, courts continue to sentence defendants to death, and today there are around 600 people on death row.



Part One of the report, subtitled *A Public Ready to Accept Abolition*, was authored by Carolyn Hoyle with the assistance of Dr Diana Batchelor. This examined opinions on capital punishment among the public through a representative survey of 1,672 individuals. Only half (51%) expressed support for retention of the death penalty, with only a third (32%) stating that it should 'definitely be kept'. When the public considered the risk of the state executing innocent people, support fell to just 28%.

Part Two of the report, subtitled *Overwhelming Support for Abolition Among Opinion Leaders*, was authored by Carolyn Hoyle and DPRU Postdoctoral Researcher Dr Lucy Harry. This part of the study explored attitudes among opinion leaders through interviews with 42 people considered influential in shaping, or in responding to, public opinion in Kenya. It was found that there was considerable support for abolition among opinion formers, with 90% of those interviewed in favour. Furthermore, 75% of opinion formers believed that the public would accept abolition if it became government policy.

### MEDIA & ENGAGEMENT

On 13 June 2022, Carolyn Hoyle, Parvais Jabbar and Samson Omondi of KNCHR published an op-ed article in Kenya's *The Star* newspaper, titled '[As Africa rapidly turns away from capital punishment, is it time for Kenya to abolish this relic of a colonial past?](#)'.

On 17 June 2022, Carolyn and Parvais published another op-ed article in *The Star* newspaper, titled '[There is strong evidence Kenyans want abolition of the death penalty](#)'.

On 20 September 2022, Carolyn, Parvais and Lucy Harry published an article on *The Conversation* website, titled '[Why has Kenya not abolished the death penalty? Habit and inertia](#)', and reproduced in newspapers across Africa.

The reports received positive coverage from various Kenyan media outlets, including [The Daily Nation](#), [The Standard](#), [The Star](#), [Capital FM](#), [People Daily](#) (see p2) and [K24](#). *The Star* newspaper [published an editorial](#) supporting abolition, and the report's findings were featured in a *KTN TV news* segment, available to watch [on YouTube](#).

## KENYA OPINION RESEARCH (CONT.)

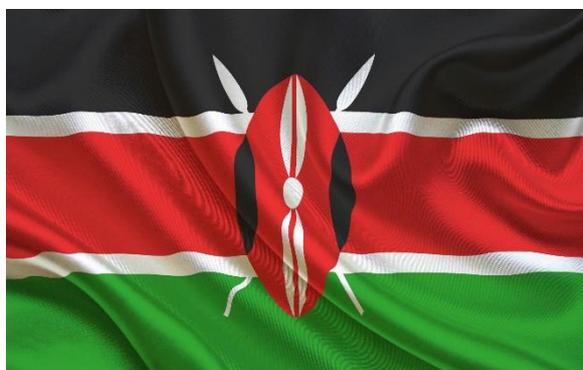
The two reports were formally launched at an event held in Nairobi, Kenya on 14 June 2022. The launch was attended by a wide range of stakeholders including legislators and those working within Kenya's criminal justice system, along with diplomatic representatives, members of local organisations, and media workers.



*Image: Delegates at the launch of the report in Nairobi, Kenya on 14 June 2022.*

An overview of the findings of the reports, written by Carolyn Hoyle and Parvais Jabbar, can be found on the DPRU Blog [here](#). The reports can be read in full on the DPP website [here](#) and [here](#).

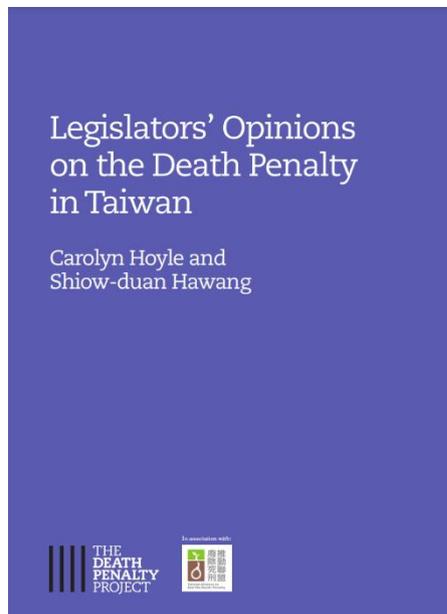
## KENYA SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESEARCH



The DPP and the DPRU, in partnership with KNCHR, developed a new study examining the socio-economic profiles of death row prisoners in Kenya, with research support from DPRU Research Student Lucrezia Rizzelli. This study, titled *Living with a Death Sentence in Kenya: Prisoners' Experiences of Crime, Punishment and Death Row*, draws on interviews with 671 prisoners from 12 prisons across Kenya, exploring their lives at the time they committed their crimes, their pathways to and motivations for

offending, including why they were not deterred by harsh penalties, and their experiences of the criminal justice process and imprisonment. It will be published later this year and launched in Kenya in early 2023. We are also soon to commence research on the attitudes of parliamentarians, to be launched in late Spring 2023.

## TAIWAN OPINION RESEARCH



In February 2022, a new DPRU study on the views of opinion leaders in Taiwan on capital punishment was published by the DPP, in partnership with Taiwan Alliance Against the Death Penalty (TAEDP) and Soochow University. The report, titled *Legislators' Opinions on the Death Penalty in Taiwan*, was authored by Carolyn Hoyle and Professor Shio-w-duan Hawang

of Soochow University, Taiwan. The study, based on interviews with one-third of Taiwanese legislators, found that the majority (61%) would like to see the death penalty abolished. A majority also expressed fairly low levels of trust in the criminal justice system, with 71% of retentionists and 65% of abolitionists asserting that wrongful convictions 'sometimes' occurred.

This report followed on from an earlier study published by the DPP, authored by Professor Chiu Hei-Yuan and edited by the late Professor Roger Hood, published in June 2019, which evaluated public attitudes towards the death penalty in Taiwan. That report, *For or Against Abolition of the Death Penalty: Evidence from Taiwan*, found that while the majority of the public favoured retention, only 32% were strongly opposed to abolition. It also found that public knowledge was very limited, with only 0.2% of respondents able to correctly answer four basic factual questions about the death penalty. When these earlier findings were shared with legislators in the 2022 study, support for abolition rose from 61% to 81%. Details of the public opinion research can be found on the DPP website [here](#).



Photo credit: Matthew Fang via Flickr.

The new report was launched through an online event on 24 February 2022, at which Carolyn Hoyle and the DPP's Saul Lehrfreund gave an overview of its findings. A blog post by Carolyn and Saul detailing the main findings of the opinion leaders research can be found on the DPRU Blog [here](#). The new report can be read in full on the DPP website [here](#).

## MEDIA & ENGAGEMENT

On 24 February 2022, an op-ed article by Carolyn Hoyle and Saul Lehrfreund was published in *The Taipei Times*. The article, titled 'Path to abolition clear of obstacles', argued that not only do legislators support abolition, but that this support can be bolstered by the introduction of research detailing the limits of public support. The article can be read on *The Taipei Times* website [here](#).

On 7 March 2022, the TAEDP's Maria Wilkinson published an article in the independent Taiwanese media outlet *The News Lens*, titled 'Legislators leading public opinion on the death penalty'. The article can be read on *The News Lens* website [here](#).

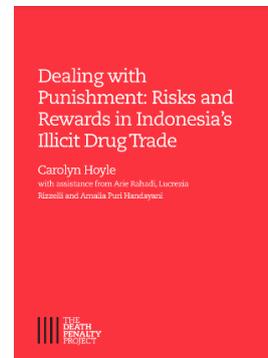
## INDONESIA DETERRENCE RESEARCH

In 2022, the DPP and DPRU, together with partner organisation, LBH Masyarakat and with assistance from Atma Jaya Catholic University of Indonesia (AJCU), completed a new research report, titled *Dealing with Punishment: Risks and Rewards in Indonesia's Illicit Drug Trade*.

This report was written by Carolyn Hoyle, with assistance from Lucrezia Rizzelli, a DPhil student at the DPRU, and Arie Rahadi and Amalia Handayani, researchers at Atma Jaya University in Jakarta. It formed the first part of a wider programme of research, funded by the DPRU's new ESRC research grant, which will aim to thoroughly test the justification used by many retentionist governments in Southeast Asia that the use of harsh punishments deters drug offenders.

The *Dealing with Punishment* study was conducted through face-to-face interviews with 57 prisoners in a prison in Jakarta, all of whom had been convicted of drug offences and sentenced to between 8 and 12 years in prison. Their accounts of their decision-making processes indicated that although the mechanisms for deterrence to work were clearly present, the participants had nonetheless made the decision to engage in drug offending and had not been deterred.

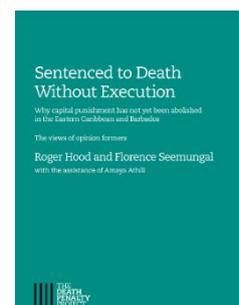
The wider programme through the ESRC project will seek to interview those in prisons across Indonesia who have been convicted of drug offences and sentenced to death or life in prison and those in drug-using communities who have not been convicted of serious offences.



## EASTERN CARIBBEAN AND BARBADOS OPINION RESEARCH

In November 2021, the DPP and the Faculty of Law at the University of the West Indies hosted an online roundtable meeting on opinion research on the death penalty from the Eastern Caribbean and Barbados, together with partners from Greater Caribbean for Life, the St Vincent and the Grenadines Human Rights Association and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

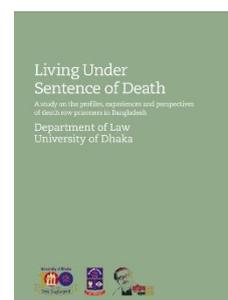
An overview of the findings from the DPP's 2020 report *Sentenced to Death Without Execution* is provided in a blog post by Saul Lehrfreund and Carolyn Hoyle which can be read on the DPRU Blog [here](#). The full report can be accessed from the DPP website [here](#).



## BANGLADESH SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESEARCH

In March 2022, the DPP published a new research report on the death penalty in Bangladesh, titled *Living Under Sentence of Death*, in collaboration with the Department of Law at the University of Dhaka and the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST).

An overview of the report's findings is provided by its lead authors Professor Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman and Psymhe Wadud in a post on the DPRU Blog [here](#). The report can be read in full on the DPP website [here](#).



## DPRU MEMBERS

### DPRU STAFF

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**Daniel Cullen** is Research Officer in the DPRU, where he is responsible for the administration of the Unit, is Managing Editor of the DPRU Blog and works on the DPRU's ESRC and John Fell Fund research projects. He previously worked in the Strategic Litigation team at Amnesty International, supporting the organisation's programme of international human rights litigation, and as a Programme Assistant at the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in Geneva, with a focus on the death penalty and children's rights.



**Dr Lucy Harry** is a Postdoctoral Researcher in the DPRU, working across the ESRC and John Fell Fund projects. Her doctoral research focused on women sentenced to death for drug trafficking in Malaysia. As part of this, she conducted empirical research in Kuala Lumpur, and was a Visiting Scholar at Monash University, Malaysia. Lucy holds a MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice (with Distinction) from the University of Oxford, and a First-Class undergraduate degree in Social Anthropology from the University of St Andrews. Throughout her DPhil, Lucy worked as a research assistant on a number of DPRU projects including research on opinion leaders' views on the death penalty in Kenya.



**Jocelyn Hutton** is an ESRC Research Officer in the DPRU, leading on the development of the Mapping Projects and working on the DPRU's ESRC and John Fell Fund projects. Jocelyn previously worked at Middlesex University and the Université du Québec à Montréal (2011-2013, 2015-2016), with Dr Helena Wray & Professor Brad Blitz on research projects on the human rights of migrants. She was also involved in writing Expert Witness Reports with Dr Helena Wray and Professor Werner Menski (SOAS) for clients in immigration and asylum cases.

### DPRU PARTNERS

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**Parvais Jabbar**, co-founder and co-executive director of The Death Penalty Project, has for 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, Parvais has led and participated in international delegations advising on criminal justice reform and lectures on capital punishment. He is co-applicant on the DPRU's ESRC project, 'Mapping the Political Economy of Drugs and the Death Penalty in Southeast Asia'.



**Saul Lehrfreund**, co-founder and co-executive director of The Death Penalty Project, 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 published and lectured extensively on these topics. He has led on a number of projects the DPRU has worked on.

## DPRU RESEARCH STUDENTS



**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** has just started 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. In 2021, he was elected 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.



**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](#). Her research focuses on the experiences of women on death row in Zambia and Kenya.



**Abdul Rashid Ismail** is researching 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. His research explores the factors that contribute to the movement for abolition in Malaysia and those that militate against abolition.



**Lucrezia Rizzelli** is researching the death penalty in Indonesia and its deterrent effect, or lack thereof, on drug crimes, 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. It is hoped that challenging the applicability of general deterrence theory to the reality of Indonesian couriers and drug traffickers will help dismantle the belief that capital punishment is effective in deterring drug crimes.



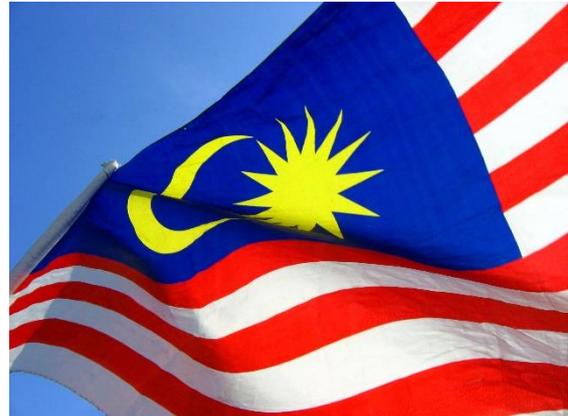
**Serene Singh** is researching women on death row in the US. More specifically, she intends to identify the influence of jurisprudence on 'cruel and unusual punishment' on the ways in which women sentenced to death experience justice.

## DPRU IMPACT & ENGAGEMENT

### ABOLITION OF THE MANDATORY DEATH PENALTY IN MALAYSIA

In June 2022, the Malaysian government announced that it would [abolish the use of the mandatory death penalty](#) for 11 offences, giving judges the discretion to decide on the appropriate sentence. The announcement followed a meeting of the Malaysian Cabinet to review the findings of a report on alternative sentencing submitted by a Special Committee commissioned by the country's former Chief Justice, Richard Malanjum.

The Special Committee's report on alternative sentencing featured expert testimony submitted by the DPP's Parvais Jabbar and Saul Lehrfreund, Carolyn Hoyle, and the late Professor Roger Hood. Their testimony detailed the inherent arbitrariness of the use of the mandatory death penalty, while emphasising that restriction of its use should be seen as a step towards the full abolition of capital punishment.



*Photo credit: Eric Teoh via Flickr (CC BY-SA 2.0)*

The announcement was welcomed by [a statement from a group of UN experts](#), who emphasised that "the mandatory use of the death penalty constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of life and is a fundamental infringement upon the independence of judiciary and fair trial guarantees. It denies judges the possibility to consider the defendant's personal circumstances or the circumstances of the particular offence and individualise the sentence."

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](#).

### OSLO PEACE DAYS SEMINAR

In December 2021, Carolyn Hoyle was a keynote speaker at a conference on international, regional, and national efforts towards ensuring abolition of the death penalty hosted by the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights as part of the [Oslo Peace Days 2021](#) event and attended by practitioners, policy-makers, diplomats, and academics.



Carolyn's keynote lecture, 'Efforts towards Abolition of the Death Penalty: Challenges and Prospects', reflected on the role of international human rights treaties in promoting universal abolition and progressive restriction of the death penalty, their achievements, and their limitations.

## INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY, MADRID

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On 19 May 2022, Carolyn Hoyle spoke at the International Congress against the Death Penalty event '[Against the Death Penalty: \*Opinio Juris\* and International Law](#)' in Madrid, Spain, organised by the [International Academic Network for the Abolition of Capital Punishment \(REPECAP\)](#).

Carolyn's 'In Memoriam' presentation addressed the contributions to death penalty scholarship by the late Professor Roger Hood, whose decades of research on capital punishment laid the foundations for the establishment of the DPRU.



*Image: William Schabas, Luis Arroyo Zapatero and Carolyn Hoyle at the event in Madrid.*

## 360INFO ARTICLES ON MALAYSIA AND BAHRAIN

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In September 2022, Lucy Harry published an article on women facing the death penalty in Malaysia on the *360info* website, affiliated with Monash University, Melbourne. The article, part of a special edition focusing on the death penalty, was titled 'Foreign women bear the brunt of Malaysia's harsh drug laws' and discussed the disproportionate impacts of Malaysia's Dangerous Drugs Act for foreign national women – who are generally in economically precarious positions and vulnerable to being duped or coerced – sentenced for drug trafficking offences. It was reproduced by the Malaysian national online news website, *Malaysiakini*, [here](#). The article, and others on the death penalty, including by Dr Natalia Antolak-Saper, of Monash University, and Professor Asmin Fransiska of Atma Jaya University can be read on the *360info* website [here](#).



Carolyn Hoyle, Lucy and Jocelyn Hutton also published a co-authored article on *360info* titled 'How the Bahraini judicial system fails its migrant workers'. The article detailed the issues of labour exploitation and torturous conditions in confinement experienced by foreign nationals facing the death penalty in Bahrain. The article can be read [here](#).

## ABOLITION ADVOCACY IN GHANA

In July 2022, Carolyn Hoyle travelled to Accra, Ghana as part of a delegation led by Saul Lehrfreund of the DPP and including Meg Gould, a US lawyer, and Kofi Boakye, Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Anglia Ruskin University and Co-Director of the African Institute for Crime, Policy and Governance Research.

The visit, facilitated by the Australian High Commission and the British High Commission, was aimed at bolstering support for two Parliamentary Bills aimed at abolishing the death penalty for ordinary crimes – the Criminal Offences (Amendment) Bill 2022 and the Armed Forces (Amendment) Bill. The delegation engaged with Parliamentarians and other leaders to discuss this opportunity for abolition and met with key stakeholders to understand how they could support local abolition efforts.

To assist Ghanaian Members of Parliament and the Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee in considering the Bills, the DPP, Carolyn Hoyle, and the Africa Institute for Crime, Policy and Governance Research produced a memorandum recommending the abolition of the death penalty.

During the visit, the delegation met with the Attorney-General, the First Deputy Speaker of the Ghanaian Parliament, members of the Parliamentary Judiciary Committee and Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee, members of the diplomatic community, civil society groups and religious leaders, as well as participating in a panel discussion on the death penalty at the University of Ghana School of Law.

The visit received positive media attention, with coverage in [The Pulse](#), [News Africa](#), and [Ghana News Agency](#). On 25 July 2022, a group of MPs led by Francis-Xavier Sosu MP successfully introduced the two Bills before Parliament, marking a crucial step in the legislative process towards abolition of the death penalty for all ordinary offences.



*Image: The delegation visiting the office of the Ghanaian Attorney-General.*

## AMANDA CLIFT-MATTHEWS' ADVOCACY AND LITIGATION

Amanda Clift-Matthews, a barrister and part-time DPRU DPhil student researching capital drug punishment in Singapore worked with a group of lawyers, NGOs, and other stakeholders to advocate for three men who faced execution in the country. In connection with these cases, in February 2022 she wrote an article published by *The Independent*, '[Singapore must urgently halt planned executions of two low-IQ drug mules](#)' (free registration required to read), together with a post for the DPRU Blog, '[Singapore resumes executions amid heightened international scrutiny](#).'

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### Singapore must urgently halt planned executions of two low-IQ drug mules

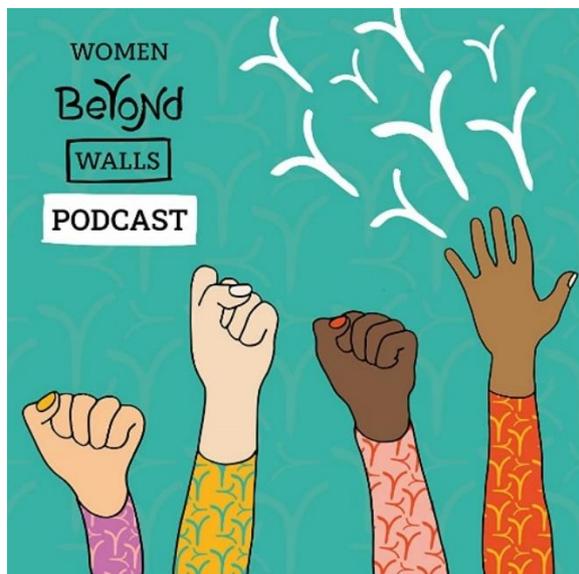
Roslan bin Bakar and Pausi bin Jefridin are scheduled to be hanged today, writes **Amanda Clift-Matthews**



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In November 2021, Amanda also appeared as counsel before nine members of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) in a legal challenge to the constitutionality of the mandatory death penalty for murder in Trinidad and Tobago. In April 2022, [she joined Doughty Street Chambers](#) as a tenant specialising in criminal law and human rights law.

## SABRINA MAHTANI'S WOMEN BEYOND WALLS PODCAST



In November 2021, lawyer and part-time DPRU DPhil student Sabrina Mahtani launched a new podcast, *Women Beyond Walls*, focusing on women's incarceration, featuring interviews with women with lived experience of the justice system, feminist lawyers, activists, and experts.

The first episodes of the podcast featured Susan Kigula, who spent a decade on death row in Uganda; Simitie Lavalley of the Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission; Samantha Chong, a Malaysian criminal defence lawyer; Jhody Polk of the Legal Empowerment and Advocacy Hub; and Debbie Kilroy of Sisters Inside. Listeners can find the podcast on [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Spotify](#), as well as [other podcast platforms](#).

## ***FUNDING GOALS***

The Death Penalty Research Unit (DPRU) is grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), 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.

The DPRU was established with generous funding from Lady Edwina Grosvenor, a philanthropist and committed penal reformer. This donation funded a part-time researcher for three years and has enabled us to have a very busy and productive first two years. While the DPRU has had a successful year in attracting funding for specific projects, we have only one more year of this 'core' funding and therefore seek further ongoing funding to sustain our small research team, to continue to organise events, to produce briefing papers to introduce policymakers, practitioners and civil society to academic research, to conduct impact and engagement work beyond our empirical research, and to grow our lively blog (articles from which have been cited in various international reports, including by the United Nations).

### **The Roger Hood Fund**

To recognise Professor Roger Hood's impressive legacy and deep-seated integrity and humanity, the Centre for Criminology has established a fund in his name towards death penalty research and scholarship. Donations to the Roger Hood Fund can be made [here](#).