

NO JUSTICE WITHOUT LIFE

1st Asia Pacific Dialogue on
Human Rights and Respect for the Dignity of Life
Manila, October 27-28th 2014

APPEAL TO ALL WOMEN AND MEN OF GOOD WILL IN ASIA PACIFIC REGION TO STOP THE DEATH PENALTY

We, men and women of different countries of the Asia Pacific Region, from different cultural, religious, ethnic, political backgrounds and traditions, have gathered in Mandaluyong, Metro Manila, on the invitation of the Community of Sant'Egidio and the City of Mandaluyong for this 1st Asia Pacific Dialogue on "Human Rights and Respect for the Dignity of Life".

We have lived these special days here, with fellow friends and activists, authorities, law enforcement and public officers, religious representatives, international institutions from Italy, EU, Asia, the US, the United Nations, and we have been strengthened in the conviction that there is "No justice without life".

Justice has at its roots the rationale of saving lives and to make life safer. Justice that kills is never justice. Justice that kills makes the state and society as low as the killers that wants to punish. We have to always be, as human beings and as a society, different from those who, for a terrible combination of factors, may be guilty of heinous crimes.

When the state kills it reaffirms at the highest level that life, under special circumstances, can be taken away by a human hand. It legitimates a culture of death, while supposedly wants to make life safer and to highlight the value of life. The death penalty does not make safer the life of citizens, because it puts death in the center, and inaccurately chooses among many who put to death or allow to live.

This is why we commit ourselves to work to create a larger consensus to the call for a universal moratorium on executions, adopted by the majority of countries at the UNGA. We ask our governments and the governments of the world to be pro-active in supporting and implementing this Resolution.

The death penalty does not bring closure to the victims' families, who are made to stay in a limbo without forgiveness, in sorrow, for many years to come after the loss of their beloved. The death penalty always creates new victims, that are children, relatives of the people sentenced to death: they did not commit any crime but already having a hard life: they instead are and will be accompanied by social stigma for a lifetime. The death penalty is too often at risk of putting to death innocent lives: the results of DNA tests and many cases of exonerated people, acquitted because innocent, in different parts of the world, show that wrongful convictions are not rare. Perfect justice does not exist. Nobody can take away what cannot be given back. To take away lives is the ultimate, irreparable mistake.

The death penalty is not a tool to deter crime and violence, because perpetrators are often people who deal with death more than with life. They are not scared by any death. On the contrary capital punishment may encourage acts of violence against law enforcement people even inside prisons, because no hope is on sight, and no rehabilitation permitted. The death penalty disproportionately

hits social, religious, ethnic minorities, and too often it has been used against political oppositions, depicting heroes as criminals.

Many of us, from different cultures and religions, deeply think that life is sacred and it is not in mercy of human hands. Tonight we feel and we deeply hope that a new day is beginning for Asia Pacific Region, to reach the four corners of the world: the new dawn of a more humane and righteous world, a world without the death penalty! Each one can become an active worker in the construction of a world without the death penalty. We want to be “builders of life”, that is the basis of peaceful society.

Nelson Mandela, from the dock, at the culmination of the Rivonia Trial in April 1964 said: "During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony with equal opportunities, a society without capital punishment. It is an ideal, which I hope to live for, and to see realized. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die".

All together we thank a great spiritual leader as Pope Francis, who just asked us, every Christian and every person of good will, to do all what is possible to abolish on earth the death penalty and to work to promote a more humane life in prison, never disregarding human dignity. We commit ourselves to this. We will work as an Asia Pacific Region network to reach this goal.

We, as young people, professionals, people of goodwill commit ourselves to make this dream reality and to live, pray and work for the world sooner may be a world without death penalty, always respecting human life and dignity, firmly believing in possible rehabilitation of a human being.

Yes: NO JUSTICE WITHOUT LIFE!

Manila, October 28th, 2014