



**Response to the Call for Inputs for the Secretary-General’s report on the question of the death penalty:**

**Women and the gender dimension of the death penalty  
for the  
63rd Session of the Human Rights Council  
September 2026**

**Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights**  
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1996

- Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Masyarakat**
- Legal Awareness Watch**
- The European Saudi Organization for Human Rights**
- The Maldivian Democracy Network**
- The Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty**
- Avocats Sans Frontières France**
- Abolition Death Penalty of Iraq**
- Center for Prisoners’ Rights Japan**
- The Coalition of Somali Human Rights Defenders**
- Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty**
- Hope Behind Bars Africa**
- Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network**
- Center for Legal Support & Inmates’ Rehabilitation**
- and
- The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty**

Submitted 13 March 2026

**The Advocates for Human Rights** (The Advocates) is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law since its founding in 1983. The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publication. The Advocates is the primary provider of legal services to low-income asylum seekers in the Upper Midwest region of the United States. The Advocates is committed to ensuring human rights protection for women around the world. The Advocates has published more than 25 reports on

violence against women as a human rights issue, provided consultation and commentary of draft laws on domestic violence, and trained lawyers, police, prosecutors, judges, and other law enforcement personnel to effectively implement new and existing laws on domestic violence. In 1991, The Advocates adopted a formal commitment to oppose the death penalty worldwide and organized a death penalty project to provide pro bono assistance on post-conviction appeals, as well as education and advocacy to end capital punishment. The Advocates currently holds a seat on the Steering Committee of the World Coalition against the Death Penalty.

**Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Masyarakat (LBH Masyarakat/Community Legal Aid Institute)** is a not for-profit non-governmental organization that provides free legal services for the poor and victims of human rights abuses; undertakes community legal empowerment for marginalized groups; and advocates for law reform and human rights protection through campaigns, strategic litigation, policy advocacy, research, and analysis. LBH Masyarakat advocates for the abolition of the death penalty and defends the rights of people facing the death penalty or executions.

**Legal Awareness Watch (LAW)** is a volunteer-based nongovernmental organization that promotes and protects the rights of vulnerable individuals in Pakistan, particularly women and children facing life imprisonment or the death penalty. LAW provides pro bono legal defense, conducts awareness campaigns, and delivers training workshops on child justice to strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders. Through its advocacy and education initiatives, LAW works to end the use of the death penalty and life imprisonment for children and women and to advance fair and humane practices within Pakistan's justice system. LAW is a member of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

**The European Saudi Organization for Human Rights (ESOHR)** is a nonprofit organization establishment, established by a group of activists aiming to strengthen the commitment of human rights principles in Saudi Arabia. ESOHR vision is to expand the area of human rights in all fields in full measure, by working to urge the concerned as legislative or executive to activate it, raise awareness and empower citizens of their rights through education.

**The Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN)** is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation advocating for human rights and democracy in the Maldives. MDN was formed in 2004, allowed to register in the Maldives in 2006, and arbitrarily shut down following blasphemy allegations by the Government of Maldives in 2019. MDN currently works in exile.

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

**Avocats Sans Frontières France (Lawyers Without Borders France)** is an international non-governmental organization dedicated to defending human rights and promoting access to justice for the most vulnerable populations. Since 2011, ASF France has been working for the abolition

of the death penalty in Nigeria. Through legal aid, capacity building, and advocacy, ASF France works to strengthen the rule of law and reform in the use of the capital punishment in the country.

**Abolition Death Penalty of Iraq** organization (OADPI) is an alliance of more than 160 NGOs, bar associations, local authorities and unions and was created in Rome on 13 May 2002. It was created as a result of the commitment made by the signatories of the Final Declaration of the 1st World Congress Against the Death Penalty organized by the French NGO Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM) in Strasbourg in June 2001. The aim of the World Coalition is to strengthen the international dimension of the fight against the death penalty. Its objective is to obtain the universal abolition of the death penalty. To achieve its goal, the World Coalition advocates for a definitive end to death sentences and executions in those countries where the death penalty is in force. In some countries, it is seeking to obtain a reduction in the use of capital punishment as a first step towards abolition.

The **Center for Prisoners' Rights Japan** (CPR) was established in March 1995 as the first Japanese NGO specializing in prison reform. CPR's goal is to reform Japanese prison conditions in accordance with international human rights standards and to abolish the death penalty. CPR is a member organization of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty.

The **Coalition of Somali Human Rights Defenders** (CSHRD) is a civil society network dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights defenders and vulnerable communities in Somalia. Its work aligns with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to gender equality, justice, peace, and inclusive societies. Through advocacy, documentation, protection initiatives, and partnerships, CSHRD strengthens civic space and supports accountability and human rights protection in Somalia.

**Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty** works for restorative justice in the form of effective alternatives to the death penalty. FADP works to build and mobilize public and political support for abolition using a coordinated, strategic, and empowerment-oriented approach incorporating a broad network of individual Floridians, murder victims' family members and other survivors of violent crime, law enforcement professionals, families of the incarcerated, and death row exonerees.

**Hope Behind Bars Africa (HBBA)** is a women-led, human rights-focused social enterprise and non-governmental organisation based in Nigeria, operating in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 2021. Founded in 2018, HBBA works to close the justice gap for marginalised populations, with a particular focus on people from low socio-economic backgrounds who are at risk of or currently facing incarceration. HBBA conducts research, advocacy, and legal support, and develops evidence-based interventions to improve access to justice. HBBA provides direct representation to women on death row, ensuring that they have access to fair trials, legal counsel, and support during appeals and clemency processes. The organisation also offers psycho-social support, rehabilitation programs, and reintegration assistance to women in conflict with the law, addressing their specific needs and promoting holistic reformation.

**Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network** (ADPAN) is the peak regional body for organisations committed to the abolition of the death penalty across Asia-Pacific, with members from 20

countries within the region. As such, ADPAN maintains that the death penalty violates the right to life, that it is the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment and that the death penalty should be entirely abolished internationally.

**The Center for Legal Support and Inmates' Rehabilitation (CELSIR)** is a social enterprise organization dedicated to advancing access to justice for indigent persons and victims of human rights violations. Through legal aid, paralegal training, prison-based legal empowerment programs, and advocacy on sentencing reform and the death penalty, CELSIR works to strengthen fair trial rights, promote humane justice systems, and support the rehabilitation and reintegration of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons.

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

1. This report focuses on women and the death penalty, incorporating responses to a March 2026 survey of World Coalition Against the Death Penalty members. Additionally, during the reporting period the CEDAW Committee highlighted discrimination experienced by women affected by the death penalty in its periodic reviews of Iraq,<sup>1</sup> Japan,<sup>2</sup> Kenya,<sup>3</sup> Qatar,<sup>4</sup> Saudi Arabia,<sup>5</sup> Sri Lanka,<sup>6</sup> and Thailand.<sup>7</sup>
2. In 2025, courts in India sentenced 10 women to death, all for murder<sup>8</sup>—the highest number since 2016.<sup>9</sup> In 2024, courts sentenced 8 women and one transgender person to death.<sup>10</sup> 24 women were on death row at the end of 2025, 4.18% of the overall death row population.<sup>11</sup> Courts frequently issue sentences soon after conviction, raising fair trial concerns for women who may not have sufficient time to gather gender-related mitigation evidence.<sup>12</sup>
3. In a 2026 report, LBH Masyarakat describes the experiences of six of the nine women on Indonesia's death row, exploring the structural vulnerabilities the women experienced prior to their crimes, as well as vulnerabilities throughout the criminal legal process.<sup>13</sup>
4. Abolition Death Penalty of Iraq reports that Iraqi authorities have executed at least one woman since July 2024. Another World Coalition member reports that fewer women are on death row in Sri Lanka.
5. Center for Prisoners' Rights Japan (CPR) reports that as of the end of 2024, Japan held six women on death row. No court had recognized any history of gender-based violence or discrimination in their cases. Yet CPR learned that husbands (and codefendants) of two women had subjected them to violence, and that interrogators subjected them to sexual harassment. Because trials do not separate determination of guilt from sentencing, defense attorneys

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<sup>1</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Iraq*, (Feb. 23, 2026), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/IRQ/CO/8, ¶¶ 18-19.

<sup>2</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of Japan*, (Oct. 30, 2024), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/JPN/CO/9, ¶ 57.

<sup>3</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *List of issues and questions in relation to the ninth periodic report of Kenya*, (Mar. 3, 2025), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/KEN/Q/9, ¶ 2.

<sup>4</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *List of issues and questions prior to the submission of the third periodic report of Qatar*, (Mar. 3, 2025), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/QAT/QPR/3, ¶¶ 4, 5, 12, 20.

<sup>5</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Saudi Arabia*, (Oct. 30, 2024), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/SAU/CO/5, ¶¶ 4, 9, 15, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of Sri Lanka*, (Feb. 28, 2025), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/9, ¶¶ 17-18.

<sup>7</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Thailand*, (July 20, 2025), U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/THA/CO/8, ¶¶ 17, 18, 45, 55.

<sup>8</sup> Square Circle Clinic and NALSAR, *Death Penalty in India Annual Statistics Report 2025 & 10 Years of Death Penalty Data (2016-2025)*, at 4, 9, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JFjVA\\_Zg8IFSVMZ9Ey7B5lxV2N7w8dII/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JFjVA_Zg8IFSVMZ9Ey7B5lxV2N7w8dII/view).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 70.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 65.

<sup>12</sup> The Advocates for Human Rights and The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, *India's Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women Suggested List of Issues Prior to Reporting Relating to the Death Penalty*, Sep. 29, 2025, ¶ 26, [https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/International\\_Submissions/A/Index?id=622](https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/International_Submissions/A/Index?id=622).

<sup>13</sup> LBH Masyarakat, *Accumulated Suffering Under Relational Punishment: A Portrait of the Lives of Six Women on Death Row and Their Families*, 2026, at 19-31, <https://lbhmasyarakat.org/files/Accumulated%20Suffering%20Under%20Relational%20Punishment%20A%20Potrait%20of%20The%20Lives%20of%20Six%20Women%20on%20Death%20Row%20and%20Their%20Families.pdf>.

representing women are disincentivized from presenting mitigating circumstances relating to sentencing, such as a codefendant’s gender-based violence, fearing the court may perceive such evidence as an admission of guilt. Police do not allow defense lawyers to attend interrogations, making sexual harassment during interrogations hard to detect.

6. In September 2024, the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls wrote to Japanese authorities about male staff monitoring women on death row, stating that “stereotyping and gender bias in the justice system have far-reaching consequences for women’s full enjoyment of their human rights, including rights across the justice chain, from pre-trial, trial, sentencing, appeal, and in relation to conditions of detention.”<sup>14</sup>
7. In 2025, CPR interviewed two women on death row:
  - One woman experienced repeated detention and interrogations for approximately 18 months, despite exercising her right to remain silent. Investigators questioned her about irrelevant sexual matters, and she said the interrogations severely violated her sense of privacy and dignity. Police removed the privacy screen on the lower half of her cell under the pretext of suicide prevention, fully exposing her to male staff.
  - A court sentenced the other woman to death for allegedly conspiring with her husband to murder. Her husband had repeatedly subjected her and her son to violence. Her lawyer did not actively raise the issue at trial, and the court made little reference to it.
  - Both women live in cells with 24-hour surveillance cameras in the ceiling. In 2025, the Tokyo High Court ruled that authorities had subjected a man on death row to over four years of unlawful detention over a detention of 14 years and 4 months. But authorities continue to hold the two women in such cells, where they have lived for 12 years and 24 years respectively.
  - Prison authorities provide women with menstrual pads limited to 5 at a time. Staff sometimes instruct women not to “overuse” supplies, asking intrusive questions like “What day of your period is it?”
8. The Adaleh Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) reports that 22 women are on death row in Jordan as of the end of 2025, approximately 10-12% of the total death row population. The women mostly come from marginalized socioeconomic communities, affecting the quality of legal representation, and corresponding lower levels of education increase vulnerability to legal exploitation or involvement in crimes. Moreover, these women typically cannot cover the costs of tribal reconciliation, precluding an important means of mitigating a death sentence.<sup>15</sup>
9. ACHRS reports that during investigations, authorities do not carry out gender analysis including the context of gender-based violence and other social factors. Authorities fail to

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<sup>14</sup> Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitration executions et al., Allegation Letter, 24 Sept. 2024, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29384>. See also International Federation for Human Rights, Center for Prisoners’ Rights, and World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, *UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women, Shadow Report*, 6 Sept. 2024, [https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/fidh\\_cpr\\_wcadp\\_cedaw\\_89\\_japan\\_final.pdf](https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/fidh_cpr_wcadp_cedaw_89_japan_final.pdf).

<sup>15</sup>

consider the psychological and emotional aspects of women coming into conflict with the law. Gender stereotypes affect fair trial rights; women’s “behavior in court often has to conform to the traditional understanding of female roles.”

10. Jordan’s legal system allows the victim’s family to waive personal rights to the death penalty, thereby commuting or mitigating a death sentence. ACHRS explains that women face discrimination in this regard, because stigma and notions of “compromised honor” reduce the chances that women will benefit from a waiver. Women’s families are reluctant to engage in tribal reconciliation negotiations or to cover the costs due to societal perceptions that women are worth less than men. Families are more willing to provide men with such support.
11. ACHRS reports that detention centers provide women with inadequate health care, particularly related to motherhood, pregnancy, and menstruation. Detention authorities do not respect women’s need for privacy. Women on death row also face isolation and social stigma, with inadequate opportunities to communicate with family.
12. The Maldivian Democracy Network reports that in 2025, the Supreme Court of the Maldives dismissed a woman’s “battered woman syndrome” plea to challenge her conviction and potential death sentence for murdering her husband. The court did not consult state records with evidence of the woman’s claims of post-traumatic stress disorder caused by prolonged, severe physical and psychological domestic violence. Her husband’s family ultimately chose forgiveness and therefore she escaped the death penalty.
13. Hope Behind Bars Africa (HBBA) reports that 82 women are on death row in Nigeria. In 2025, HBBA held a study<sup>16</sup> validation meeting to highlight unique challenges that women sentenced to death in Nigeria face. Participants, including the National Human Rights Commission, called for a moratorium and gender-sensitive reforms, noting how structural inequalities disadvantage women.<sup>17</sup>
14. The European Saudi Organization for Human Right reports that between 1 July 2024 and February 2026, authorities in Saudi Arabia sentenced 12 women to death. 8 are foreign nationals (5 from Nigeria and 1 each from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Kenya). Authorities sentenced 6 women for drug-related offenses, 5 for murder, and 1 for kidnapping/sorcery. Drug offences are the overwhelming majority of cases involving foreign women. Cases involving Saudi women appear primarily linked to domestic or interpersonal violent crimes.<sup>18</sup>
15. The Coalition of Somali Human Rights Defenders (CSHRD) reports that in February 2026, authorities in Puntland, Somalia executed a woman who had been convicted just three months

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<sup>16</sup> Hope Behind Bars Africa, *Beyond Her Sentence: A Technical Analysis of Gender and Capital Punishment in Nigeria*, Dec. 2025, <https://hopebehindbarsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Beyond-Her-Sentence-A-Technical-Analysis-of-Gender-and-Capital-Punishment-in-Nigeria.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Ameh Ochojila, *70% of women on death row in Nigeria are mothers — Study*, The Guardian, Oct. 15, 2025, <https://guardian.ng/news/nigeria/national/70-of-women-on-death-row-in-nigeria-are-mothers-study/>; *82 Nigerian women sentenced to death in 10 months — Report*, Daily Trust, Dec. 9, 2025, <https://dailytrust.com/82-nigerian-women-sentenced-to-death-in-10-months-report/>.

<sup>18</sup> European Saudi Organization for Human Rights, *Women’s Executions in Saudi Arabia: From Fragile Protection to Systematic Violations, 2015-2025*, 2026, [https://www.esohr.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Womens\\_Executions\\_in\\_Saudi\\_Arabia\\_From\\_Fragile\\_Protection\\_to\\_Systematic.pdf](https://www.esohr.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Womens_Executions_in_Saudi_Arabia_From_Fragile_Protection_to_Systematic.pdf). See also ALQST for Human Rights, *Women Facing the Death Penalty in Saudi Arabia: Invisibility and Structural Injustice*, 2026, <https://alqst.org/uploads/women-facing-the-death-penalty-in-saudi-arabia-invisibility-and-structural-injustice-en.pdf>.

prior of beating to death an orphaned relative she had taken in as a housekeeper.<sup>19</sup> The media sensationalized the case, motivating authorities to execute her swiftly. An NGO said the case “shocked the nation” because the perpetrator was a woman, “as it went against the widely accepted beliefs of women being protectors, caregivers and nurturers.”<sup>20</sup> The woman’s attorney said he did not have time to adequately prepare for trial. The woman argued she was mentally unstable and did not remember the events, but the court did not authorize a medical assessment. The woman waived her right to appeal, mistakenly believing her family would pay blood money.<sup>21</sup> CSHRD adds that in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas, women are at risk of execution for violating gender-based dress codes.

16. The Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty (TAEDP) reports that authorities denied access to justice to the one woman on Taiwan’s death row; the court’s judgment focused on her shirking stereotypical female duties, and that discrimination motivated the court to sentence her to death. TAEDP also reports that in February 2026, a lay judge court sentenced a woman to death for killing a police officer in a drug-driving incident.
17. Thailand sentenced 21 women to death in 2024, and as of the end of 2024, 39 women were on death row.<sup>22</sup> According to the International Federation of Human Rights, the death penalty for drug-related offenses disproportionately affects women.<sup>23</sup> During a December 2024 country visit, the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls observed that legal proceedings do not address the trauma or coercion that women in conflict with the law can experience, violating fair trial rights.<sup>24</sup>
18. Center for Legal Support and Inmates’ Rehabilitation (CELSIR) reports that in July 2025, Vietnamese authorities commuted a Kenyan woman’s death sentence for drug trafficking. CELSIR attributes the victory to sustained diplomatic intervention paired with legal reforms in Vietnam. The case “underscores the extreme vulnerability of women facing capital punishment abroad and highlights the need for gender-responsive consular protection and legal support for women.”

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<sup>19</sup> See also Sarah Johnson and Mohamed Sheikh Nor, ‘A rushed execution’: the case of the woman convicted of child murder that shocked Somalia, The Guardian, Feb. 25, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/feb/25/execution-woman-child-saabirin-saylaan-murder-somalia-hodan-mohamud-diiriye>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> The Advocates for Human Rights, Anti Death Penalty Asia Network, International Federation for Human Rights, and The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, *Thailand’s Compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: The Death Penalty*, May 19, 2025, ¶ 7, [https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/International\\_Submissions/A/Index?id=602](https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/International_Submissions/A/Index?id=602).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.* ¶ 14.