

**CHILDREN OF PARENTS
SENTENCED TO DEATH OR
EXECUTED**

**17th World Day Against
the Death Penalty**



**IN THEIR OWN
WORDS**

**10 OCTOBER 2019
WORLD DAY AGAINST
THE DEATH PENALTY**

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This document has been compiled by the Secretariat of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty with infallible aide from member organizations, including the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran, Amnesty International, the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, “Free Mumia!” French Support Group, Japan Innocence and Death Penalty Research Center, the International Federation for Human Rights, Iran Human Rights, Journey of Hope... From Violence to Healing, Justice Project Pakistan, Penal Reform International – Africa Office, Sant’Egidio, the Sunny Center and Wells of Hope Ministries.

We thank all those who accepted to share their testimony.

1. Asia

Muhammad Arif (Pakistan)

“An error of the state not only cost two innocent lives, it destroyed ours too”

Ghulam Qadir was arrested in 2002 along with his brother and sentenced to death three years later. The Supreme Court of Pakistan acquitted the brothers citing flawed testimonies a year after their execution.

I was just over a month old when my father was imprisoned in 2002. I have only ever seen him in jail — a shadow of his former self, a man who I did not even know was my father till much later in life. Life has been difficult growing up. My mother works at people’s homes to feed my brother and me. We sometimes do not have enough money to even buy a few chillies to eat with bread. My uniform has patches because we cannot afford to get a new one. I sometimes think I should give up studying and start working to ease the burden on my brother and mother, but I then remember my last visit to my father. We met briefly in 2015. He had asked me to study hard so I would be able to get a job. I want to finish higher studies and join the army. My father was eventually acquitted in October 2016, but by then it was already too late. He had been executed along with his brother a year earlier, soon after we met. My family received no compensation. An error of the state not only cost two innocent lives, it destroyed ours too.

(Testimony gathered by Justice Project Pakistan)

Muhammad Haris (Pakistan)

“That’s when we found out our father was in prison and could die”

Abdul Basit has spent over 10 years on death row. He is permanently disabled and likely to be bedridden for life. He is confined to his cell and is reliant on officers for his personal hygiene.

I was only 3.5 years old when my father was arrested in 2008 and sentenced to death a year later. My mother told my younger brother and me that our father worked in France and could not visit us because he was very busy with work. We lived with our maternal grandmother and uncles which we did not like. Our mother worked as a teacher and gave tuitions in the evening, so we saw very little of her, while our uncles mistreated us — scolding us for the mistakes of their own children too. It was a relief when my mother recently rented a separate house for us three.

We met our father in 2011 for the first time since his arrest. He was admitted to a hospital for tubercular meningitis which had left him paralyzed from the waist down. We were told he had come back to Pakistan because he would get free treatment at a jail hospital as my grandfather had served in the police. My younger brother used to ask, “Why do they (hospital staff) talk rudely? Why don’t they allow us to be with him for the entire day?” In 2016, when the presidential stay on my father’s execution expired, everyone was weeping. That’s when we found out our father was in prison and could die.

We want to spend time with him just like other children in our school and family do with their fathers. Because of his absence, we were treated differently by our extended family and acquaintances. There was on one to wish us on our birthdays or to invite us over during holidays. Our mother has had a tough time supporting us financially and bringing us up. We request the government to let our father go now. He has spent enough years in prison. We miss him. Please return him to us.

(Testimony gathered by Justice Project Pakistan)

Homan Mousavi (Iran)

Born on the execution rope

I was born in prison, on Yalda, the night of the winter solstice, in 1986. A month earlier, my father had been arrested on fake charges of cooperating with a banned opposition group. He was taken to Adelabad Prison of Shiraz (my city) and was executed within weeks. By then, my mother and my aunt had been arrested as well. My mother gave birth in Adelabad Prison, and I spent the first two years of my life inside the prison. In 1988, my mother was executed as part of a five-month wave of mass executions of political prisoners. For the rest of my life, the shadow of my parents' executions hung over me.

I was raised by my aunt after she was released from prison. An older brother and sister had been placed among other relatives and lived far away. My upbringing was difficult, marked by poverty and neglect. There was no fatherly hand on my shoulder, no motherly affection. I wished that they would throw a birthday party for me and that someone would buy me a gift, but it never happened. I was 12 when I received my first summons to the Shiraz division of the Intelligence Ministry. I had done nothing wrong to attract the gaze of the security services. This was my everyday dark story as a child.



They wouldn't let me study at university, although I got permission after they forced me to sign a commitment letter to avoid any political activity at university. It was April 2010, nearly a year after the disputed presidential victory of Mahmud Ahmedinejad sparked massive street protests and thousands of arrests. I was one of them. I was arrested for participating in and documenting the Green Movement protests. I cried throughout the incident. I felt so much pressure, and finally, the interrogation ended after spending seven months at a cell in the Evin prison's infamous Section 209 under tortured where they told me every single day that "we're going to execute you like your parents." I was thinking they might come back and take me to the gallows at any moment, it had already happened to my family. I was raised with the understanding that innocent people can be captured and executed. In the end, my trial was over in 20 minutes without any lawyer. My sentence: three years in prison, a prohibition from all state universities, fines, and 74 lashes. I really felt like I had no regrets about having gone onto the street to film the demonstrators, to help make sure the world heard their voices. It was a good feeling."

"My name is Seyyed Hooman Musavi. I was born on December 21, 1986, in Shiraz's Adelabad Prison. My mother, Hayedeh Eslami, and my father Seyyed Shantia Musavi, were executed in Adelabad Prison in the summer of 1988, and on April 29, 1989, respectively. I was with my mother in prison from birth until her execution..."

I also have an older brother and an older sister. We were separated after our parents' execution, however, because no one in the family was willing to keep all three of us. My brother grew up with my uncle [my father's brother] in Tehran, and my sister was sent to my aunt [my mother's sister] in the town of Mahshahr. I grew up in Shiraz with my aunt [my father's sister] and her three children..."

I was four or five years old when I thought that my parents must have done something they weren't supposed to and had therefore been executed... About the age of 10-12, I understood what had happened. I even asked a lot of questions: What happened? What were my parents doing?"



It is only when one grows older and looks back that one realizes what has happened to them and what hardships they have endured. I get chills when I think about the circumstances under which I was born and raised. There was always sorrow and crying in our family. I didn't receive love, nor did I learn manners; I grew up like street kids. It was at the school cafeteria in college that I learned for the first time that I had to bring the spoon up to my mouth; before then I always leaned down on the table [and lowered my head] and ate. I have hatred inside me, to this day. As soon as I opened my eyes to the world, they took life's most precious things away from me, my mother and father.

Life was hard: I longed for a lollypop, for a birthday party, for money, for nice clothes. The result of all this was that I realized I had no one in this world, that I had to be myself and stand on my own two feet. Now at 27, I still get extremely upset and distressed when I read the news of someone's execution; I get nightmares and wake up in the middle of the night."

(Testimony shared by the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran and gathered by Iran Human Rights)

Homa Shahsavaripur (Iran)

"I was always very careful"

My name is Homa. I'm 38 years old. My father was arrested for dealing drugs when I was five years old and he was executed when I was nine...

The only memory I have of school is that, personally, I always tried to stay positive, in the sense that I was always careful not to get into a quarrel with the other kids [to avoid] having them tell me that my father was in prison. So I was always very careful. This is something that has become an integral part of me and even to this day, I always try not to get into any conflicts with anybody for fear of being disrespected or having my father judged. This has been true both when he was in jail and I didn't want other kids to know he was in jail, and in the years since he has been executed, [when I've wanted to avoid] people telling me he was executed...



Even when it's necessary to challenge someone, even verbally; because I was afraid that at that very moment, they would tell me that my father was an "e'dami" [derogatory Persian term for a person who was executed], you know what I mean? I think it happened once or twice to my friends, and once or twice to me after my father was executed, where, because of an argument that I had at school, they said behind my back, "These people lived off of ill-gotten money and their father was hanged". That, unfortunately, is society's perception, without understanding the great defects in our judicial system, without understanding the process my father was put through to have such a fate. This is one of the biggest problems facing the families of those who have been executed...

Personally, I never talk about my father's execution unless they ask me or I know at that moment that I need to tell the truth to that particular person, group, or group of friends. When I think about why it is that I don't like to talk about it, it's because I don't like to be judged – or more like [I don't like] my father [to be judged]. Because the others might not even continue [the conversation]: "What happened to your father?" "My father is dead." "How did he die?" "He was executed." You know what I mean? I mean the term "execution" [has this connotation] that the person was so vicious and demonic, so evil, and his crime was so serious and awful that the state saw no other solution except to eliminate him. Whereas

my father was none of those things, and many people like my father weren't as well. Maybe 99% of the people who are put to death in this country are in this same situation. ... They may not say anything to my face, but I don't even want them to have this thought in the back of their mind, about my father, about my family: "Oh what dangerous criminals these people are, what an ungodly and unthinkable thing her father must have done to be executed, 'eliminated', 'obliterated'." That's what's extremely difficult. And I think we all have that [feeling] and we carry it with us like a secret.

(Testimony gathered by the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran. For further information, feel free to watch Homas's interview on the Internet: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Zz_bVfPulM)

C. Hayashi (Japan)

Son of a mother sentenced to death. And likely wrongfully convicted?

A Summer Tragedy

On July 25, 1997, 67 people were sickened and four died after ingesting curried rice mixed with arsenic at a summer festival in the city of Wakayama. Two of the deceased were children. The police compiled a list of suspects but still did not have sufficient evidence to make an arrest. With the public hungry for justice, criminal justice authorities released the name of a prime suspect, a 37 year old mother of four- Masumi Hayashi. The evidence was paltry and circumstantial. Hayashi had been in close contact with the curry that afternoon, and her husband had access to arsenic for his extermination business.

The Two Japans

On the surface, Japanese society seems orderly and well disciplined. But let the cat out of the bag, and it turns into a feeding frenzy of hungry predators seeking prey. Tens of reporters began 24 hour vigils outside the Hayashi home. They came with ladders to peek over fences, and telephoto lenses to capture scenes inside the house. Wherever the family ventured, reporters battered them with microphones and cameras.

Absolutely sickened with the constant stress and attention, Hayashi turned a hose on the photographers. The media used the event to their advantage and Hayashi was found guilty in the court of public opinion. And soon afterward in a court of law. Based on scant evidence she was convicted and sentenced to death in December, 2002.

Of the 118 people under sentence of death in Japan, only two are known to have children. Hayashi has three daughters and one son. Her son was 10 years old at the time of the arrest, and 15 when the first death sentence was handed down. Now age 31, he responds to some requests for interviews, but only to those whom are sympathetic.

Interview with C. Hayashi.

How often do you visit your mother?

"I used to visit twice a year, but after the massive hangings in 2018, my mother has become nervous and and I now visit 4 times a year. It takes over two hours one way to get to the detention center and I can only see her for 20 minutes. An officer is always present in the room and a camera films everything. The camera is only used for those on death row."

What is your family's comprehension on the situation?

"None of us can really fathom it. There is no substantial evidence, all that exists is circumstantial. There is no confession, and the state has never shown a motive. How does someone get sentenced to death on such scant material?"

How is she doing?

“Not very good. Death row prisoners do not receive dental treatment and she has lost most of her teeth. She is allowed outside her cell only for exercise, bathing and visits. Exercise is twice a week in a large dog run-and always alone. Likewise, bathing is also twice a week. She may not speak with other prisoners, all meals are served in her cell. Tv is allowed only a few times during the year-when there are consecutive holidays. She may not received visits or even mail from non-family members. If you send her a card, she is told whom it is from, but not allowed to see it.”

How has having a mother on death row impacted your life?

“Things were hard at school, I was isolated and ignored by other kids. Naturally, my employer does not know about the situation. In order to rent an apartment, a guarantor is necessary, and nobody wants to be mine. I found a wonderful women and wanted to get married. She did not mind that my mother was on death row, but when her parents learned, the engagement was broken off.”

Do you fear that she might be executed?

“Our attorneys are doing a superb job of collecting new scientific evidence. The appeals will continue for many years. It is very unlikely that she will be executed any time soon. She may very well languish on death row and pass away from old age. If she were sentenced to life, she would be in a prison and working and communicating with other prisoners. Her present fate is to rot in solitude.”

(Testimony gathered by Japan Innocence and Death Penalty Research Center)

2. Europe

Aliaksandra Yakavitskaya (Belarus)

“According to the law, we were not allowed to bury [the body]”

Aliaksandra is Henadz Yakavitski’s daughter. Henadz Yakavitski has been sentenced to death and executed in 2016.

29-year-old Aliaksandra (Sasha) Yakavitskaya is wedding and fashion stylist. Her father Gennady Yakavitski, convicted of murder, was sentenced to death and executed in 2016. Aliaksandra learnt about his execution a month after it had taken place. She remembers that on the day of the execution indicated in the death certificate she made all the way to the Valadarka prison where death convicts are detained to pass him a parcel. The latter was accepted by prison authorities although as she suggests, her father must have been shot or executed shortly after. She could not visit him on that day since family visits are regulated by law and can only take place once a month: a right that she had already used that month of November when execution took place.



“It’s very hard. The execution can take place any moment and no one will notify you neither in advance nor immediately hereafter” – Sasha Yakavitskaya about the effect of her father’s conviction.

“A month after the execution, I received a letter - just a piece of paper - notifying me of the fact that the death sentence had been carried out. Until the very last moment, we had hoped for a moratorium, that everything will be fine, but unfortunately, it was not the case.”

Uncertainty about the execution date and the execution process itself causes additional suffering, aside from the painful fact of killing: “It is very hard to realize that it had happened since my father’s personal belongings had not been returned to us, neither had we seen his body. According to the law, we were not allowed to bury it. We were neither informed of his place of burial. Hence, I still have a feeling that he’s still out there is that it is alive and well.”

“Up to date, we continue wondering in what cemetery is he buried. We can only guess. Without having the possibility to visit his grave, we go to pray to our family grave. A lot of rumors exist concerning what happens to the bodies of the executed, and nobody knows for sure since it is classified information.”

Conviction to death of a close relative chases her years after the execution: “So many people are constantly approaching my mother with unbelievable stories that my father is still alive. Some call her to request a ransom for information on his tomb.”

“There are only a handful of people in our country who consider this problem to be important and who advocate for the abolition. Some are afraid. Some are just mean. It was hard to recover from the shock after reading some comments on the Internet about my daughter, who is four years old, claiming she has to undergo the same fate as my father since she has his genes.”

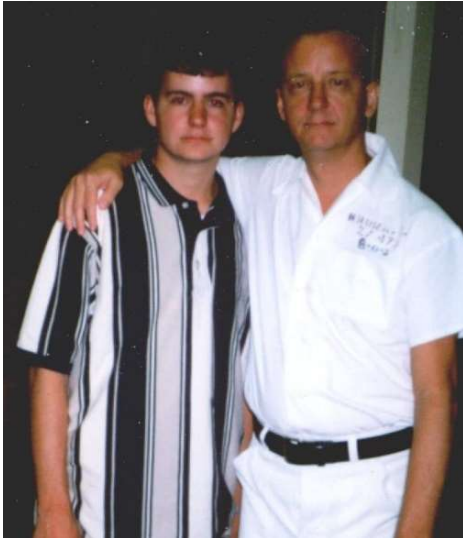
“I am often asked why I tell my story. The thing is that people’s attitude concerns me. They do not understand my family’s tragedy.”

(Testimony gathered by Amnesty International and shared and elaborated by International Federation for Human Rights, available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkm50C7zsIE>)

3. North America

Dr. Chris Brown (United States of America)

“We waited throughout the day for news that never came”



My father [Gary Brown] was sent to death row in the U.S. state of Alabama when I was six years old. Sentencing in Alabama is arbitrary and capricious, and though my dad was the least culpable of three men involved he was the only one sentenced to death. I grew up with the stigma and shame of having a father on death row. I learned to dread the moment when people would ask about my family or what kind of work my parents did. I was shamed and denied opportunities when people knew the truth about my family.

In 2002, while I was in college, he received an execution date; he then received a stay of execution from the U.S. Supreme Court eight hours before he was scheduled to die. We felt like pawns in a political game. In 2003 he received a new execution date, and with a new governor in office we were put through a sham of a clemency hearing that made a mockery

of both our family and justice. Finally, on April 24, 2003, my dad was killed. We waited throughout the day for news that never came.

Then we saw the news articles that reported what he said, what he ate, and what he had left for me as an inheritance. Every private detail became public record to be consumed and commented on by the masses. My father and I shared a tremendous faith, which helped him face death with dignity and helped me recover in the years that. His death gained nothing and cost much.

(Testimony gathered by Journey of Hope... From Violence to Healing)

Robert Meeropol (United States of America)

“I pretended not to understand what was going on so adults would not fuss over me”

Robert is the youngest son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg

As a child I lived a nightmare. I believe my brother, Michael, and I are the only children in the history of the United States to have had both their parents executed by its government. My parents, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, were arrested in the summer of 1950, shortly after my third birthday. They were executed on June 19, 1953, when I was six.

How much do I remember from when I was six years old? I particularly remember the last week of my parents' lives. On Monday June 15, when our Supreme Court adjourned for the summer, my parents were scheduled to die that Thursday. On Tuesday a special petition was presented to one Justice as he left for vacation. On Wednesday that Justice stayed the execution and went on vacation. On Thursday the Supreme Court was recalled into special session. On Friday morning the stay was overturned by a 6-3 vote. My parents were executed that evening, Friday, June 19, one minute before sundown so as not to “desecrate” the Jewish Sabbath.

How well did I understand such complex events? Although I couldn't read the newspapers, I saw this on TV and heard about it on radio. As a six-year-old, my interpretation of these events was that prior to Monday, June 15, the Supreme Court asked my parents' lawyer to give them ten reasons why my parents should not be killed and he did. So the Supreme Court stayed the execution. Then they reconvened the court that Thursday to ask the lawyer for an eleventh reason. When he was unable to provide it, my parents were killed.

I pretended not to understand what was going on so adults would not fuss over me. While in some ways I did not understand, I got the essence.

(Testimony shared by "Free Mumia!" French Support Group)

Christina Tafero (United State of America)

"Forgiveness and love will see you through"

Robert is the daughter of Sonia "Sunny" Jacobs, sentenced to death in 1976 and exonerated in 1992, and Jesse Tafero, executed in 1990.

An innocent child,
a baby so pure.
My life was a sickness
for which there was no cure.
In the blink of an eye they were taken away
and from that day on,
my life would never be the same.
Safe and secure in my mother's arms,
I was torn away and subject to harm.
A baby I was,
lost and alone.
My mother and Father may never come home...
My arms are spread,
please Momma STAY,
Daddy I LOVE YOU... will you be home
today???

Soon my love, soon...is all I would hear
but those days grew farther, and life was
unclear.
More tragedy and loss is what I would face.
Battered and bruised.... with tears down my
face.
Momma COME HOME,
I can't yet my love,

but SOON BABY SOON...
That was a bluff.
For you never came...
and I was lost in this game of life,
with nothing but heartache and strife.
When they murdered my Father my heart broke
in two.
I wanted to die... TO BE WITH YOU.
I tried,
and I failed
but my courage prevailed.
I was damaged too.
So they sent me away...
JUST... LIKE... YOU.
Years gone by I would not see your face.
Hear your sweet voice,
or feel your embrace.
Then one day out of the blue,
they said my Mother was FREE AND COMING
FOR YOU!!!!
MY HEART filled with joy
and my eyes filled with tears.
Finally, FINALLY after all these years.

MY very best friend
and one half of my heart.
We can build a new life
and have a new start.
Let FREEDOM ring to the beat of my heart.
They say that time heals
and this my friends is true.
FORGIVENESS and LOVE will see you
through.
And although there are obstacles in my way
and all the repercussions from that fateful day.
The pain hurt and anger are still very real
and maybe one day my soul will be healed.
But I'm not alone,
there's many of us.

Who have overcome the injustices placed upon
us.

WE ARE NOT VICTIMS

WE ARE NOT WEAK

WE are STRONG individuals

with a voice to speak.

Sharing our Stories,

Sharing our pain.

Just like in this room today.

I HOPE EVERYONE HERE TODAY FINDS
HEALING PEACE AND LOVE TO FULFILL
YOU.

Thank you,
Christina Tafero

(Testimony written for the occasion of the 7th World Congress Against the Death Penalty (Brussels, 2019) gathered by The Sunny Center and shared by Sant'Egidio)

4. Sub-Saharan Africa

Tom Kalanzi (Uganda)

“I felt betrayed by the system”

Tom is Mpagi Edimary's first-born son. Mpagi Edimary has been imprisoned in 1981 and pardoned in 2000.

I was born in 1975. I was 6 years old when my father was arrested in 1981. I grew up with a sickly paternal grandmother. I studied at Kitenge Primary School in Masaka and dropped out in primary six due to financial constraints. I learnt about my father's imprisonment for murder when I was 15 years old. I was told that he had been sentenced to death. I was traumatized because I knew I was to never see him again. Later I come to learn that the person my father was alleged to have killed was still alive. This greatly tortured me, and I felt betrayed by the system for cheating me of a father for 19 years.

(Testimony gathered by Penal Reform International – Africa Office)

Susan Kigula (Uganda)

Plight of a mother on death row

On the 9th of July 2000 Susan's life takes a dramatic turn. She was attacked with her late husband and he was killed instantly. Susan survived narrowly with a deep cut [...] on the right side of her neck. The twenty-year-old Susan is accused of murdering her husband. A vital piece of testimony comes from her stepson, who is only three years old at that time. There is no solid evidence against Susan. She left behind her one-year old daughter Letecia [when this ordeal started].

“No one could imagine the pain, agony, and despair that I felt when the arresting officer was pulling me away from my one year old daughter as she cried ... maa..ma! ma.a.ma...!, reaching out to me with her tiny hands in vain, while my dear, now late Dad was taking her away from me. It was a horrible scene, a scary memory that I don't wish any mother to experience ever in life. That's how I was separated from my baby for 16 years over a crime I DID NOT COMMIT!!” narrates Susan.

For the judges, Susan is [found] guilty, and she is sentenced to death by hanging. A fate that she shares with thousands of prisoners in Uganda. The death sentence is mandatory in the case of murder at that time – no matter if the murder was an act in self-defense or a witness did not say the truth.

But Susan fights back against her fear and the injustice. Instead of resigning, she decides to fight for her rights and for the rights of all the women and men from death row.

Letecia grew in the hands of Susan's parents before they died. Sadly, they all died when Susan was still in prison. They tried to protect her from the harsh circumstances her mother was going through, but they could not anymore as she grew up to six years [old] and started inquiring about her mother. “ I asked grandma where my mother was, and she told me she was at school. All along, they had told me she was at school and I believed them. We could visit her once in a while. But of late, I had overheard a neighbor saying my mother was in prison. I wanted to know what a prison is. I asked to be taken to my mother” recalls Letecia.

Was I alone in this situation? Absolutely NO! The death row section consisted of more than 50 ladies, all waiting for their end of time. We all lived in fear, not knowing what would happen the next day. It was like that, every day and night. What will happen to our children if we die in prison? Children... the plight of every dying mother!

We were hopeless, desperate, helpless, angry at the people who took us to prison, angry at the law, bitterness crippled our hearts and sicknesses took advantage of the situation to torment us!! This went on for years until when we realized that we needed to forgive and seek forgiveness as well.

Being the youngest among the rest, I gathered the remaining energy and strength in me to encourage myself first. I made a decision, not to live in despair anymore. I told myself, I am not a criminal, I have never been a criminal, and will never be a criminal!!! I refused to allow what was going on in my life to determine my future. Just like David, in the Bible, encouraged himself [through] the Lord, so did I.

“One day my mother came to visit me in prison, with my daughter. [My daughter] asked me a question that left me dumbfounded. Mummy are you in school or in prison? If you are in school, why are your teachers dressed up like policemen?’ Leticia asked”.

This was the most traumatizing moment Susan experienced at the time. “I knew this was the time for me to explain everything to my daughter with such a young and inquisitive mind, but with an intelligence that surprised me. After explaining to her, how I got in prison, she said ‘I hate the people who brought you in prison’. You have to forgive them... I told her. She then said ‘I forgive them, but I don’t like them’. I never wanted my baby in any way to have any emotional attachments to my being in prison, but I could not have control over it, when in prison”.

Susan is convinced that the mandatory death sentence violates human rights. Susan and other inmates on death row organize a petition challenging Uganda's mandatory death sentence. They aimed to abolish capital punishment by declaring it unconstitutional. Susan, the law student, moves to the supreme court of Uganda.

Because of Susan`s extreme engagement there is hope for all inmates from death row: The Supreme Court ruled, that death row inmates could go back to the High Court for retrial.

Susan also goes back to court and proclaimed her innocence, pleading not-guilty to murder for a second time. Then the High Court reduces Susan's sentence and her journey of freedom starts from there.

Susan, while on death row, starts a school in prison, where she was a teacher as well as a student. She graduated from high school in that very school she started, and the University of London offered her a scholarship to study law. She is the first female inmate to graduate with a Diploma in Law, followed by a Law Degree.



In 2014, Susan finally made it: She has graduated in law with excellent marks. Thanks to her extreme fighting spirit, the former death-row inmate has become a full-blooded lawyer.

(Testimony gathered by San'Egidio)

Alex Mpagi (Uganda)

“I called over different radio stations”

Tom is Mpagi Edimary’s son. Mpagi Edimary has been imprisoned in 1981 and pardoned in 2000.

I was born in 1979 after my father had been separated from my mother during a civil war. My mother died in 1984. I was taken under the custody of my maternal grandmother who never knew the whereabouts of my father. We brewed local beer for livelihood and for my school fees. After primary seven I left school due to lack of money. My quest to search for my father started in 2006. I called over different radio stations and even went to a witch doctor in Masaka. In 2007 I was advised by Mr. Kabagele Samuel to take announcements to CBS radio. Fortunately, my father heard the announcements and we were united. I was always traumatized not knowing my father and until now I am traumatized by the fact that I did not go further with my education. This was all because my father had been sentenced to suffer death.

(Testimony shared by Penal Reform International – Africa Office)

Grace Cissy Nambasa (Uganda)

“Whenever I asked about my father, my grandfather would beat me”

Tom is Mpagi Edimary’s daughter. Mpagi Edimary has been imprisoned in 1981 and pardoned in 2000.

I was born in March 1979 when my mother and my father had separated due a civil war. I lived with my mother who did not know the whereabouts of my father. When I was 8 years old, my paternal grandmother searched for me and took me to her home. Whenever I asked about my father, my grandfather would beat me. When I was in senior three class, one of the family members secretly told me that my father had been imprisoned at Luzira maximum security prison in 1981 for murder and had been sentenced to suffer death. I was always traumatized whenever I heard that some inmates had been executed in Luzira prison, thinking my father was among them. I escaped from my grandparents and went to join my mother for I knew she could help me visit my father in prison. Finally, my mother and I visited Luzira prison in 1994 where we met my father, he did not know who I was. When he was released in 2000, people dressed in army and police uniforms started to confront me asking how my father had been released and where he was.

(Testimony shared by Penal Reform International – Africa Office)

Rehema Namulemo (Uganda)

“I feel sad that I will not have that opportunity again to even share a meal with him”



Namulemo Rehema is my name and I am 17years old in senior three at Wells of hope high school. My father was sentenced to death when my mother was 8 months pregnant, this is what she told me and she doesn’t want us to talk about it, I had never seen my father for all those years before joining Wells of Hope. I lived with my mom but after life becoming so hard for them, my mom decided to leave me with my granny so that she could go to Kampala and work.

I feel scared and at times stressed when I start thinking about the fact that one day my father will be hanged in prison and I feel sad that I will not have that opportunity again to even share a meal with him, I want to request government to listen to what the family says about the inmate and do thorough investigations before a person is put on death row

I want to be an accountant in future and my best subjects are mathematics, English and entrepreneurship. My hobbies include chatting with friends and reading novels, my best dish is matooke and beef and light green is my favourite colour.

(Testimony shared by Wells of Hope Ministries and the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative)

James Twesigye (Uganda)

“I had no one to brighten my future”

Bob Twesigye James is my name; I come from Isingiro district in western Uganda. I am an only child to both my mom and dad, but they have other children from other spouses. My father was imprisoned when I was still very young and I don't remember seeing him in my earlier years, my mom decided to take me to my paternal aunt because she had got married elsewhere I think because she couldn't wait for my dad who was on death row .



I didn't know that my father was alive until Wells of Hope intervened; I grew up with my aunty telling me that my father was killed; at one point, I asked my aunt where my father was and all she told me was he was in prison and later died there. So, all along I knew that I had no father elsewhere. Life was so miserable, and I had really lost hope in life and especially my dream of becoming a doctor had been buried since I was no longer in school. At one point, I asked my aunt where my father was and all she told me was that he was in prison and later died there. So all along I knew that I had no father and my mom had got married elsewhere, I had no one to brighten my future.

I feel very bad and scared that one day my father will be killed in prison because I have now built a relationship with him, we have so many plans together. I request government to remove the death penalty and also help children because they are innocent and to revenge the person who took him to prison

(Testimony shared by Wells of Hope Ministries and Foundation for Human Rights Initiative)

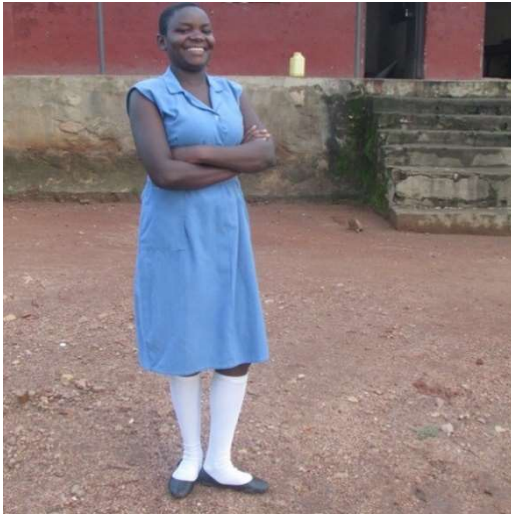
Ndgago Winnie (Uganda)

“I also want to the public to stop mob justice”

My name is Ndago Winnie, 18 years old and I come from a family of eighteen children; my father was sentenced to death in 2012. Before the arrest of my father we lived as an extended family in the same compound with all the children and their mothers.

I recall that fateful day when a dying patient was brought to our home for treatment since my father was a witch doctor. Before he could even attend to the patient, sadly, the patient died and that's where trouble started from. The relatives of the deceased and the villagers accused him of negligence that he didn't respond to the patient with immediate effect leading to his death. He was harassed and taken to police. Our house was all surrounded by policemen who had guns and knives; who grabbed, beat and

threw our dad in the boot of the car and drove off. Everyone at home was in sobs and had it in mind that he was killed and only waited for the return of his body for burial.



The situation worsened at home when villagers who were angry at the family destroyed and stole our property. They even looked for his children and other family members so that they could kill them. They referred to every family member as a murderer because of our father. I spent most of the time in the bush hiding so that I am they are not seen by the angry villagers. We lacked food, clothing and a place to stay after sometime, the police came and asked the villagers not to threaten the inmate' family anymore since their father was already serving his punishment in prison that is when the villagers gave this family some peace.

Since everything had been destroyed and stolen, when we came back home, we survived on sugarcanes and in most cases we slept on empty stomachs, we had to set up a temporarily shelter. None of us went to school anymore because our father was imprisoned “whenever I saw other children happily going to school every morning, tears rolled down my cheeks because I admired going to school again too”,

My life changed in 2013 when wells of hope reached out to our family. I feel government should abolish the death penalty because it's us the children that suffer and if you kill a person you haven't dealt with the problem and also put in place measures to support children who have a parent on death row. I also want to the public to stop mob justice.

(Testimony shared by Wells of Hope Ministries and the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative)