



Promoting fair and
effective criminal justice

UN Human Rights Council
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Item 3: Panel discussion 11 September 2013

Oral Statement of Penal Reform International

Panel on Children of Parents Sentenced to the Death Penalty or Executed

11 September 2013

Penal Reform International welcomes this panel on an important and neglected element of the impacts of the death penalty.

We are aware that where a death sentence is overturned, either due to exoneration, commutation or a change in the law or practice of the imprisoning state, the children's difficulties do not necessarily end. Those parents who remain in prison often experience very restrictive regimes, meaning their children have very little opportunity to contact them, in person or indirectly by letter, phone or electronic means. It is important that any alternative sentences are humane and best ensure the rights of the child are met, including their right to a relationship with both parents.

We would like to address the following questions to all panellists:

In situations where a parent sentenced to death is exonerated or has their sentence commuted, what are the needs of their children in that situation? What additional support do they require compared to children whose parents are imprisoned but were never sentenced to death? Which alternative sentences will best meet the rights and needs of the children? And what are the children's needs following a parent's release back into the community?

We are aware that many aspects of this issue are still unexplored, and would benefit from further engagement. We believe that a meeting of human rights experts, to consider fully the human rights framework of this issue, would be a valuable addition to the work of UN bodies, states and others in understanding and supporting children of parents sentenced to death.