



MINISTRY
AGAINST THE
DEATH
PENALTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2019

Statement from Sister Helen Prejean on Gov. Newsom's Announcement of a Moratorium on Executions

Governor Gavin Newsom's announcement of a moratorium on executions in California is truly good news—for the 737 souls on the country's largest death row, and for all who care about human rights.

Gov. Newsom is also using his full executive power to deal two other blows to California's machinery of death: he has ordered the execution chamber at San Quentin to be torn down, and he is withdrawing the state's lethal injection protocol.

We should recognize that California's death machine has never cranked away at full throttle. Since it reinstated the death penalty 45 years ago, and as human beings stacked up in their hundreds in death row cells at San Quentin, the state has carried out only 13 executions. Those 13 executions came at a mind-boggling cost to California taxpayers of \$5 billion. That's \$384 million per execution. It bears repeating: 13 executions in 45 years for \$5 billion.

These are the stats of a deeply flawed system. Imagine how those resources might have been better spent for struggling people in California, and think how those freed-up resources can now be spent: services for crime victims, medical care, affordable housing, and so much more.

The moratorium is a severe blow to the death penalty in California, but not the final blow. That will only happen when a people's initiative or referendum takes place to end capital punishment definitively. The wave of public support for abolition is swelling, a trend that Gov. Newsom's leadership will make even more inexorable. The moratorium is the beginning of the end of state-sanctioned killing in California.

I've been flying in and out of California for thirty-plus years to join with stalwart souls working to wake people up to the futility and horror of the death penalty. These dedicated abolitionists deserve much of the credit for this momentous announcement.

I rejoice. This day marks a victory for human rights over political expediency.

Sister Helen Prejean is known around the world for her tireless work against the death penalty and her bestselling book Dead Man Walking. Her organization, the Ministry Against the Death Penalty, is based in New Orleans but its reach is both national and international.

###

Media Contact: Griffin Hardy
Phone: (202) 656-7794
Email: media@sisterhelen.org

3009 Grand Route
St John, APT 6,
New Orleans, LA 70119

tel (504) 948-6557

hprejean@sisterhelen.org
www.sisterhelen.org