A Call from California Faith Leaders Urging Governor Newsom Commute the Sentences of Everyone on Death Row

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The Honorable Gavin Newsom
State Capitol Office
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Gavin Newsom,

We, the undersigned faith leaders, representing the diverse and sacred traditions of California, call upon you to take bold and compassionate action by universally commuting all death sentences in the state of California. As spiritual leaders, we are often sought for guidance on complex moral and ethical issues, and we have come to a unified conclusion: the death penalty fails to serve justice and perpetuates harm in ways that are antithetical to our shared values.

California has long been a leader in pursuing justice and human rights. Yet, the continued existence of the death penalty contradicts the principles of fairness, dignity, and the sanctity of human life. Capital punishment disproportionately impacts the poor, people of color, and other marginalized communities. It is a system plagued by the risk of executing innocent people—at least 200 individuals have been exonerated and released from death row in the United States, highlighting the fallibility of our legal system. For every nine people executed nationwide, one innocent person has been exonerated. These are risks we cannot take when human lives hang in the balance.

As faith leaders, we often walk alongside victims' families in the aftermath of violence. We understand the profound pain and grief caused by the loss of a loved one. At the same time, we also see how the death penalty prolongs and compounds this suffering, forcing families to endure years, if not decades, of legal appeals and reversals. Instead of offering closure, it delays healing and retraumatizes those most in need of support. The resources California devotes to executing people —over a billion dollars since the reinstatement of the death penalty—could be better spent on violence prevention,

mental health services, and support programs that meet the needs of victims and their families.

Across our diverse faith traditions, we hold fast to the belief in the sacredness and dignity of all human life and the inherent capacity for redemption and change. This belief compels us to oppose the death penalty and to call for a justice system that prioritizes accountability, healing, and the restoration of community. The death penalty is a relic of a punitive system that fails to create safety or address the root causes of harm. It is time for California to lead by example and reaffirm our state's commitment to justice, equity, and the sanctity of life.

Governor Newsom, you have already demonstrated extraordinary moral courage by declaring a moratorium on executions and halting the machinery of death in California. Now, we urge you to take the next step and commute the sentences of all those on death row. Such an action would not only save lives but also send a powerful message about California's dedication to building a justice system rooted in equity, compassion, and the prevention of harm.

We stand with you in this momentous opportunity to transform our state and its approach to justice. Let us create a California that values healing over vengeance and restoration over retribution.

Sincerely,

*Titles are for identification purposes only

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We Support Universal Clemency for Every Person on California's Death Row!

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
State Capitol Office
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

We respectfully implore you to commute the sentences of every individual on death row in California without delay. The time to act is now. Thank you.

Signed,

*Titles are for identification purposes only

President Salam Al-Marayati
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Los Angeles, CA

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