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# Invitation: Trends and Efforts Addressing Life Imprisonment in the United States and Around the World

Open Society Foundations  
224 W 57th St, New York, NY 10019  
Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2019

Refreshments at Noon  
Panel from 12:30-2pm

Penal Reform International's *Global Prison Trends 2019*, published in collaboration with the Thailand Institute of Justice, found that prison populations continue to rise for a number of reasons including a steady growth in the number of life-sentenced prisoners around the world. It also found that international human rights standards on the treatment of prisoners are frequently unmet, in particular for those who serve life or long-term sentences, such as inadequate health care and a lack of rehabilitation programmes.

Life imprisonment is allowed in law in at least 183 countries, often as the ultimate penalty for the most serious crimes. As of 2014, there were roughly 479,000 persons serving "formal life sentences" around the world, compared to 261,000 in the year 2000, representing a rise of nearly 84 per cent in 14 years. In the US a record 206,268 people were serving life with parole, life without parole, or virtual life sentences in 2016 — 1 of every 7 people in prison.

This upward trend will persist unless penal policies and practices are changed to limit the use of life imprisonment. Life imprisonment has replaced the death penalty in many systems. However, unlike capital punishment, relatively little is known about the sanction. At this panel trends in the use and practice of life imprisonment in the United States and globally will be examined by an expert panel.

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## Programme

### Global Prison Trends 2019

Olivia Rope, Director of Policy and International  
Advocacy, Penal Reform International

### Life Imprisonment – A Global Human Rights Analysis

Professor Dirk van Zyl Smit  
Co-author of *Life Imprisonment: A Global Human Rights  
Analysis*, Harvard University Press, 2019

### Challenging Life Imprisonment

Marc Mauer, Sentencing Project and Co-author of *The  
Meaning of Life: The Case for Abolishing Life Sentences*,  
The New Press, 2018

### Conditions for people serving Life Imprisonment

Jennifer Turner,  
American Civil Liberties Union

### Testimony – Why We Need Change

Jose Saldana,  
Release Aging People in Prison

### Q&A

#### Moderator

Jamil Dakwar, Director of the American Civil Liberties  
Union's Human Rights Program (HRP)

*Any queries please direct to Olivia Rope: [orope@penalreform.org](mailto:orope@penalreform.org)*