

**Project Title:** Expert Dialogue on Death Penalty Reform in China

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> September 2008,

**Location:** Human Rights Law Centre, Nottingham,

**Core Staff:** Prof. David Harris; Prof. Dirk van Zyl Smit; Prof Paul Roberts; Richard Pascoe (Director of China Policy Institute and Executive Committee Member, Great Britain China Institute); Caroline Przybylla, Project Officer

**Funder:** European Union

### **Project Summary**

HRLC designed and organized a one-day session of dialogue with a senior delegation of 11 experts from China on the subject of reform of the death penalty, covering recent reforms in criminal justice, particularly relating to the right to a fair trial, and UN and European human rights standards and their requirements on the restriction and abolition of the death penalty. The project was funded by the European Union.

### **Objectives**

The HRLC expert dialogue formed part of the Great Britain-China Centre's EU-funded project "*Death Penalty Reform in China.*" Between 27 September and 6 October 2008, a senior Chinese delegation visited the UK, Romania and Hungary. This European Tour aimed to make the senior delegates champions of change in the areas related to death penalty reform back in China.

HRLC's contribution to the Great Britain-China Centre tour aimed to provide the delegation with:

- Understanding of the relevant jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights relating to the death penalty;
- Recent reforms in criminal justice, particularly relating to the right to a fair trial;
- International human rights standards and their requirements on the restriction and abolition of the death penalty.

### **Participants**

The dialogue engaged 11 senior experts including:

- One legislator from the National People's Congress;
- One senior judge from the Supreme People's Court;
- Three eminent criminal law experts (key legislative advisors to China's criminal justice reform);
- Six senior research fellows.

### **Activities**

HRLC facilitated a number of short expert dialogues that broadly addressed the issue of death penalty reform in China:

- a) *An overview of the relevant jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (Prof. D J Harris);*
- b) *An overview of the International Criminal Court and the Rome Statute - Sentencing structure (Dr Olympia Bekou);*
- c) *Introduction to the China Policy Institute and to relevant research work the Institute is engaged in;*
- d) *Human rights considerations in Sentencing and Punishment;*
- e) *The British Criminal Justice system, Fair Trials, Theory.*

## **Outcomes**

The expert dialogue enabled University experts to provide specialist knowledge to the delegates in relevant areas, giving them a comprehensive understanding of the key human rights considerations to be made in criminal sentencing and punishment.