



The Death Penalty Information Center

2020 Year-End Report: Media Coverage Highlights

The Death Penalty Information Center's [2020 Year End Report](#) was released on December 16, 2020 and received extensive coverage in hundreds of print, online, television, and radio news outlets across the United States and around the world.

The year-end report acknowledged that the deep decline in death sentences and state executions was unquestionably a by-product of the pandemic, but even before the pandemic struck, the nation was on pace for the sixth straight year of near-record low sentences and executions. 2020 — a year unlike any other — featured the combination of court shutdowns from the worst pandemic in more than a century, a national reawakening on racial justice issues, and an unprecedented execution spree by the federal government. Even so, coverage of the year-end report noted that executions and death sentences in the United States fell to historic lows and that the federal government's decision to restart executions in the middle of a pandemic after a 17-year hiatus was historically aberrant and completely out-of-step with today's state death-penalty practices.

An Associated Press story that was carried by over 150 outlets noted that “President Donald Trump oversaw a full-throttle resumption of federal executions this year after a 17-year pause, carrying out 10 executions even as backing for capital punishment waned” and that 2020's execution total was higher “than any other presidency since the 1800s”— a message that DPIC Executive Director Robert Dunham pushed consistently in interviews. Robert was quoted in the Associated Press's article: “We have never seen it before. We never expected to see it. And it may be a long time before we ever see it happen again.”

Robert told the New York Times that “[a]t the time that almost every state was making the safety of its citizens a higher priority than executing prisoners, the federal government decided that it was more important for it to carry out a rash of executions without complete judicial review of those cases in circumstances that placed the public health at risk.”

Robert was featured on NPR several times, including in news stories and as a guest on *1A* and *Here and Now*, which are distributed by 360 and 475 radio stations across the United States, respectively. During his *Here and Now* interview, he said that “[w]e've seen an unparalleled politicization of the Justice Department and the death penalty is part of that. After no one had executed anyone in 17 years, this administration has scheduled more executions for a shorter period of time than at any time in either the 20th or 21st centuries.”

Robert also offered extensive interviews to reporters working locally and in specialty outlets, many of whom focused on the geographic narrowing of the death penalty and its discriminatory use against people of color. In addition, multiple outlets quoted DPIC Senior Director of Research and Special Projects Ngozi Ndulue's statement from the press release: “Racism has always infected the use of the death penalty and this year is no exception. The death penalty — as the most severe punishment — must be part of the efforts to address racism in the criminal legal system as a whole.”

A selection of notable coverage follows. Click on the headline to access each source.

* Indicates stories that included an interview with Executive Director Robert Dunham or Senior Director of Research Ngozi Ndulue

** Uses a statement from DPIC's press release

PRINT & ONLINE MEDIA COVERAGE

TOP TIER PRINT, NEWS SERVICES & ONLINE MEDIA (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
ABC News	Federal government in 2020 executed more prisoners than all 50 states: Death penalty research group **	Dec. 16
Associated Press	Report: Federal execution numbers top states' for 1st time *	Dec. 16
<i>Above story carried by Bloomberg News, Boston Globe, CBS News, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Miami Herald, Washington Post, and over 150 other local media outlets</i>		
Associated Press	Texas had fewest executions since 1996 due to pandemic *	Dec. 16
<i>Above story carried by the Austin American Statesman, Click2Texas, and other local media outlets</i>		
Bloomberg Law	Executions Fall to Near 30-Year Low Despite Federal Resumption	Dec. 15
CNN	The US government has executed 10 people this year – the most since 1986 *	Dec. 17
<i>Above story carried by numerous local news outlets</i>		
The Hill	Federal government executed more prisoners in 2020 than all states combined: research *	Dec. 16
The Guardian	Trump administration has executed more Americans than all states combined, report finds **	Dec. 16
NBC News	Death penalty at historic lows despite federal resumption of capital punishment	Dec. 15
Newsweek	Death Sentences Dropped to Historic Lows As Trump Admin Ramped Up Federal Executions: Report **	Dec. 16
New York Times	Number of Executions in U.S. Falls Despite Push by Trump Administration *	Dec. 16
<i>Above story carried by numerous local media outlets</i>		
Time Magazine	In a Year Marked By Death, the Trump Administration Cements a Legacy of Unprecedented Executions *	Dec. 30
<i>Above story carried by Yahoo! News and various local outlets</i>		
United Press International	U.S. executions in 2020 fewest in nearly 3 decades despite federal 'spree' *	Dec. 16
USA Today	Even as COVID-19 slows justice system, federal executions outnumber all states combined for the first time	Dec. 16
<i>Above story carried by Yahoo! News and various local outlets</i>		
Wall Street Journal	U.S. Executions Fall to 29-Year Low *	Dec. 16
Washington Post	Despite recent federal flurry, number of U.S. executions is lowest since 1991 *	Dec. 16

EDITORIALS AND OP-EDS (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
Allentown Morning Call (PA)	Your View: Why Pennsylvania should abolish the death penalty	Jan. 11
Baker City Herald (OR)	Letter to the Editor for Dec. 22, 2020	Dec. 22
Business Insider	Trump is ending his term with a spree of executions, once again revealing his appetite for cruelty **	Dec. 20
East Oregonian (OR)	Letter: Trump's unconscionable use of federal death penalty	Dec. 29
Los Angeles Times	Opinion: Amid COVID closures, executions in 2020 dropped to lowest level in 30 years	Dec. 16
<i>Above story carried by Yahoo! News</i>		
Miami Herald	Our Latino community should work to end the death penalty Opinion	Dec. 18
Newsmax	2020 Death Penalty Tally Highlights a Corrupt, Inept System	Dec. 18
PennLive (PA)	It's time for the death penalty to die PennLive letters	Jan. 3
Reuters Column	11th-hour executions cement Trump's legacy *	Dec. 21
The St. Louis American (MO)	The death penalty is racially biased, hypocritical and inhumane	Dec. 23
Vox	The decline and fall of the American death penalty	Dec. 30
The Washington Post	The death penalty lost more ground in 2020 — except in the Trump administration	Dec. 31

LOCAL AND REGIONAL COVERAGE (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
Dayton Daily News (OH)	Capital punishment declines nationwide, report shows	Dec. 16
Greensboro News & Record (NC)	Death sentences and executions are at historic lows in North Carolina and the rest of the country, new report says *	Dec. 23
The Newburgh Gazette (IL)	Federal Executions And The Trump Administration: 1A **	Dec. 19
Ohio Capital Journal (OH)	Death sentences, executions continue to fade in 2020	Dec. 30
<i>Above story also carried by the Highland County Press (OH)</i>		
Pennsylvania Capital-Star (PA)	Five things the Legislature can do to make Pennsylvanians' lives measurably better in 2021	Dec. 30
Pennsylvania Capital-Star (PA)	As executions slowed during pandemic, death penalty opposition continued to grow Wednesday Morning Coffee **	Dec. 16

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
Winston-Salem Journal (NC)	Death sentences and executions are at historic lows in North Carolina and the rest of the country, new report says*	Dec. 22

SPECIALTY COVERAGE (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
ABA Journal	For first time in history, federal government carried out more civilian executions than all 50 states	Dec. 17
America Magazine	In 2020, the Trump administration executed more prisoners than all states combined**	Dec. 16
The American Prospect: Ideas, Politics & Power	How Biden Can End Trump's Macabre Execution Spree*	Dec. 22
Between the Lines	In a Cruel Last Act, Trump Orders Record-Breaking Wave of Federal Executions*	Dec. 23
Bloomberg Government	What to Know in Washington: Leaders Make Progress on Aid Deal	Dec. 16
The Catholic Universe	Death penalty hits historic low in US 'despite federal execution spree'***	Dec. 28
The Crime Report	State Executions Dropped to Historic Low in 2020, as Feds Defy Trend**	Dec. 16
Daily Caller	Firing Squads, The Electric Chair And A Drug Cocktail: The State Of The Death Penalty In America*	Dec. 23
Fast Company	The Trump administration plans to execute more people during a lame-duck period than any other president	Dec. 22
The Intercept	How the Pandemic Exposed the Failures of Capital Punishment*	Jan. 3
Jurist	States move away from death penalty as federal government ramps up executions: report*	Dec. 16
Law360	Federal Death Row Executions Raise Red Flags For Advocates*	Dec. 20
The Marshall Project	Opening Statement—December 16	Dec. 16
The Progressive	Their Right to Take Your Life: A History of the US Death Penalty	Dec. 22
Catholic News Service	Death penalty hits historic low in U.S. 'despite federal execution spree,' says report***	Dec. 17
<i>Above story carried by the Tablet</i>		
The New York Beacon	Donald Trump broke a new morbid record**	Dec. 17
The Washington Times	Federal government executed more inmates in 2020 than all states combined, says watchdog group**	Dec. 16
Route Fifty	Death Penalty Used Sparingly by States in 2020 Amid Pandemic*	Dec. 16
Salon	As Trump continues killing spree, Ayanna Pressley leads call for abolition of death penalty	Dec. 19
Sentencing Law and Policy	DPIC releases year-end report stating "Death Penalty Hits Historic Lows Despite Federal Execution Spree"	Dec. 16

TELEVISION AND RADIO

NATIONAL TELEVISION & RADIO OUTLETS

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
Associated Press Radio	No title (link here)	Dec. 16
<i>Ran on KGO-AM California, KABC-AM California, KNX-AM California, KXL Oregon, KOH-AM Nevada, KOMO-AM Washington, KUOW-FM Washington, KRLD-AM Texas, KSL-AM Utah, WAJR West Virginia, KLBJ-AM Texas, WTOP Washington DC</i>		
CBS Radio	No title (link here)	Dec. 16
<i>Ran on WPTF North Carolina, WTOP Washington DC, KFGO North Dakota, KIRO Washington, KGMI Washington, KXNT Nevada, WDEL Delaware, WCBS New York, KRLD Texas, WBBM Illinois, WWJ Maryland, KCBS California, KXL Oregon, WBZ Massachusetts</i>		
Fox News Radio	No title (link here)	Dec. 16
<i>Ran on WTMJ-AM Wisconsin and WFAE North Carolina</i>		
KCRW	Press Play with Madeleine Brand: This year, US government executes the most people in more than a century *	Dec. 21
National Public Radio	1 A: The Return Of Federal Executions Under The Trump Administration *	Dec. 16
National Public Radio	Here & Now: Death Penalty Sentences Reach Historic Lows In 2020 Despite Return Of Federal Executions *	Dec. 16
National Public Radio	With Carrie Johnson: With Exception of Federal Government, Death Penalties Reach Historic Lows in U.S. *	Dec. 31
SiriusXM	POTUS — Morning Briefing	Dec. 17
WBUR-Here & Now (MA)	How Santas Are Reimagining Christmas; The Death Penalty In 2020 *	Dec. 16
WPTV (NBC) (FL)	Syndicated Broadcast Television. No title (link here)	Dec. 16
<i>Ran on WCPO Ohio, KSHB Missouri, WMAR Maryland, KMGH Colorado, WFLX Florida, WPTV Florida, KGTV California, KOAA Colorado</i>		

LOCAL TELEVISION & RADIO OUTLETS

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
KFSN-FRES (ABC) (CA)	Action News Midday	Dec. 16
KSLA-SHV (CBS) (LA)	KSLA News 12 NOW at 4	Dec. 16
KSTU-SLC (FOX) (UT)	FOX 13 News Live at 11	Dec. 16
WANE (CBS) (IN)	NewsChannel 15 at 6	Dec. 16
WATE (ABC) (TN)	WATE 6 News at Four	Dec. 16
WAWV (ABC) (IN)	Live at Five on ABC	Dec. 16
WDSU-NO (NBC) (LA)	WDSU News At Noon	Dec. 16
WLNS (CBS)/ WLAJ (ABC)	6 News at 4:30AM	Dec. 18

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
WTVD-RAL (ABC) (NC)	ABC 11 Eyewitness News at Noon	Dec. 16
WTWO (NBC)/WAWV (ABC)	NBC2 Today	Dec. 17
WUTQ (NY)	No title (link here)	Week of Dec. 14-20

INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE (in alphabetical order)

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
Alalam TV (Iran)	Trump reinstated the executions after 17 years of stopping them	Dec. 17
Agence France-Presse	US executions reached 29-year low in 2020: monitor**	Dec. 16
<i>Above story carried by Yahoo! News</i>		
Asian Pacific Daily	APD Weekly top 10 hot news (Dec. 12 - Dec. 18)	Dec. 19
Bahia Lighthouse (Portuguese)	Sum of execution of death row in the Trump administration in 2020 is greater than the total of all states	Dec. 17
Click Lancashire Independent News (UK)	U.S. executions reached 29-year low in 2020, says monitor	Dec. 18
CT Want (China)	Most in 124 years! Trump slays 10 death row prisoners since July	Dec. 18
Head Topics (Mexico)	Trump maintains the threatening tone; Biden gets vaccinated and prepares government	Dec. 22
HuffPost Greece	USA: Trump has ordered more executions than all states in 2020 as a whole	Dec. 16
La Verdad (Venezuela)	Trump administration had the highest rate of executions in US history	
Lenta (Russia)	Trump administration convicted of "exceptional bloodlust" Администрацию Трампа уличили в «исключительной жажде крови»**	Dec. 16
The Malaysian Insight	US executions reached 29-year low in 2020, says monitor	Dec. 16
News 24 (France)	Even as COVID-19 slows justice system, federal executions outnumber all states combined for the first time	Dec. 16
Nius Diario (Spanish)	The Trump Administration has authorized more executions of prisoners than all states in 2020	Dec. 16
Reader.gr (Greece)	US: Record of executions of prisoners by the Trump administration	Dec. 16

SOURCE	TITLE	DATE
RP Online (Germany)	Few executions in 2020 in the US	Dec. 16
RTL (Luxembourg)	Number of executions as low as 29 years no more	Dec. 16
Svenska Dagbladet (Sweden)	More death sentences carried out by the US state	Dec. 16
Zazoom (Italy)	Trump's latest sad "record" concerns the number of death sentences	Dec. 16