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Good morning Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear friends.

It all started in the year 1999 when my cousin, whom I called as Mamat, was murdered by a drug addict who tried to rob him. My cousin was stabbed to death at the roadside.

At that time, I was just a law student at one of the local University in Malaysia.

My family and I were very angry when were found out about it and we wanted revenge. I personally wanted the man to be sentenced to death.

However, one day, while sitting at the dining table together with my family and my aunt, I saw an ugly scenario where everyone was cursing the man. It was so ugly that I can see so much hatred in them. I suddenly felt scared because these were people who raised me to be someone good, kind and loving towards others. They totally became someone different from what I used to know. At that point of time, I realised that they were making me more sad and angrier. I then told myself that I don't want to be like them. I don't want to spent my life hating. Instead, I need to do something so that I can proceed with my life.

I then found a book which says that "if u want to proceed in life, u need to forget the past." That was the answer that I was looking for. If I want to forget the past I need to forgive the man who took the life of my cousin. Then I remembered that in the Holy Quran, Allah says that it is best to forgive others.

The next thing I did was I went to the see the man who killed my cousin in court every time he attended his trial and get to know him, his background and everything about him. I found out that he was raised by his grandmother because his parents were divorced when he was 2 years old. He didn't go to school at all because his grandmother couldn't afford it. He then ended up as a drug addict. Every time I spoke to him, I could see in his eyes how lonely he

was. No one came to his trial except me. I brought food for him. I treated him with kindness and he told me no one ever treated him like I did. I felt sorry for him. He told me that he learnt about religion in the prison and wanting to change himself. He felt guilty and regretted what he has done. To my surprise, I was able to forgive him after knowing everything about him. [PAUSE]

It took me 3 months to persuade my family and my aunty to forgive him. It wasn't an easy task but I succeeded. I still remember standing outside my aunty's house begging her to forgive him. I knew she was standing behind the door listening to me even if she refused to let me in to convince her.

Unfortunately, it is not always a happy ending. The murderer of my cousin was sentenced to death by the court although we as the victim's family have forgiven him.

During his trial, I have learnt that just like him, many people who are accused are poor or disadvantaged. Because they have no money to get a good representation, they are more easily found guilty and be sentenced to the death penalty. That is when I decided to become a criminal lawyer. I want to help the poor and disadvantaged to have a proper defence. That is why I do a lot of pro bono cases.

After becoming a lawyer for 1 year, I was again tested by God when my younger brother was arrested and charged for murder in year 2002. He was found guilty and sentenced to death in year 2009 even though the wife of the victim has forgiven my brother. She knew that he was set up by a lady who later became a witness in his case.

My brother was healthy when he was arrested. After being imprisoned for 17 years, he now has Lymphoma and Felty Syndrome. He does not get the right treatment that he should.

The death penalty is not a punishment for my brother alone. It punishes me and my family too. We suffered a lot and our suffering is not recognised by the society because my brother is the guilty party. Due to sadness and harassment from the public, my father and grandmother became sick and died. People around us treated my parents badly as if they raised a monster in the family. I was abandoned by my friends and being labelled as if I am a criminal too despite being a lawyer. I witnessed cruelty of others towards me and my family.

In my country Malaysia, the government sentences murderers to death thinking it might deter others from committing the same crime. But no, it doesn't deter others. In fact, without realising it, death penalty actually gives the idea to the public that if the government can take the life of its subjects, then why can't they do the same.

For some countries or governments, death penalty is to make everyone feel safe. But in reality, death penalty only spreads hatred, creates more victims, teaching people to act as if they are God by not forgiving others who should be given a second chance. It eventually creates a society that is ruled by violence and hatred instead of peace.

For me, only through love, forgiveness and giving others a second chance can crimes be curbed and death penalty be abolished.

Thank you.