

The Death Penalty

Background information

Capital punishment, also known as the death penalty, is a state-sanctioned practice of putting a person to death as a punishment for a crime. Methods of execution vary depending on the country, but some of the most popular methods are as followed; lethal injection, electrocution, lethal gas, firing squad and hanging. 54 countries actively practice capital punishment today, and 107 countries have abolished capital punishment for all crimes. Capital punishment is a controversial topic, and positions can vary depending on political ideology, cultural region, or religion.

Death penalty in the UN

The United Nations introduced a resolution during the General Assembly's 62nd sessions in 2007 calling for a universal ban. The approval of a draft resolution by the Assembly's third committee, which deals with human rights issues, voted 99 to 52, with 33 abstentions, in favour of the resolution on 15 November 2007 and was put to a vote in the Assembly on 18 December. The number of states voting in favour of these resolutions that abolish the death penalty has risen from 104 in 2007 to 121 in 2018 and 123 in 2020.

Reasons for support

Supporters of the death penalty will believe that the use of capital punishment will deter others from committing serious offences and that it also enables the government to keep order in their country. It is also useful to show that the judicial system is being upheld to a high standard as well as providing a solution to the problem of overpopulated prisons.

Countries and percentage of support for death penalty

China-95%	South Africa-76%
Russia-66%	Germany-23%
UK-50%	Singapore-80%
USA-60%	Thailand-92%
France-71%	Philippines-67%
Canada-51%	Hungary-52%
Japan-81%	

Reasons for opposition

People opposed to capital punishment believe that it is morally wrong to use the death penalty as punishment as it cannot be guaranteed that innocent lives will not be lost. As well as this, many officials believe that the death penalty does not even reduce the rate of violent crime (for example in the USA the FBI has found the states with the death penalty have the highest murder rates).

Points to consider

- Is the death penalty the most effective punishment?
- Are there any alternative punishments that could replace the death penalty?
- What crime is 'bad' enough to deserve death as punishment?
- What happens when an innocent person is killed?
- Does the death penalty offer closure/solace to the victims family?

Useful links

- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty/>
- <https://deathpenalty.procon.org/top-10-pro-con-arguments/>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/DeathPenalty/Pages/DPIIndex.aspx>

