

# The Death Penalty



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Bimun Jr 2023



## BACKGROUND

The first established death penalty laws date as far back as the Eighteenth Century B.C. in the Code of King Hammurabi of Babylon, which codified the death penalty for 25 different crimes.

Major arguments against the death penalty focus on its inhumaneness, lack of discouraging effect, continuing racial and economic biases, and the fact that it's irreversible. Proponents argue that it represents a just retribution for certain crimes, deters crime, protects society, and preserves the moral order.

Every day, people are executed and sentenced to death by the state as punishment for a variety of crimes, sometimes for acts that should not be criminalized.

In some countries, it can be for drug-related offenses, in others it is reserved for terrorism-related acts and murder.

Some countries execute people who were under 18 years old when the crime was committed, others use the death penalty against people with mental and intellectual disabilities and several others apply the death penalty after unfair trials, which clearly violates several international laws and rights.

According to research, there is no evidence that the death penalty decreases crime more effectively than imprisonment. In fact, in countries where the death penalty has been abolished, crime rates have not increased. In some cases, numbers have decreased.

The problem with the death penalty is that it violates one of the most fundamental rights, which is the right of life. It also violates other several rights, including the right of freedom, the right to live free from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Which are stated and protected under the Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN in 1948.

The primary means of execution in the U.S. have been hanging, electrocution, the gas chamber, firing squad, and lethal injection. The Supreme Court has NEVER FOUND a method of execution to be UNCONSTITUTIONAL, though some methods have been declared unconstitutional by state courts.

For a little perspective, the cost of maintaining a healthy inmate in jail for around 50 years is about \$150,000 Dollars. And the cost of the death penalty per execution is about 20 million dollars.



## COUNTRIES IN WHICH IS LEGAL:

A total of 108 countries have abolished the death penalty nevertheless, 55 countries still have the death penalty in their penal toolbox.

The most remarkable countries where the death penalty is still legal are the USA, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Somalia, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In 2021 2,052 death sentences were served worldwide.

**USA:** for the past 12 years, it has been the only country in the Americas to subject criminals to the death penalty. An increasing number of U.S. states have abolished the death penalty, the latest being Virginia on July 01, 2021.

**Iran:** death penalty there is carried typically, by hanging, according to the Iran Human Rights Organization. Most of those executed are convicted of murder and drug-related offenses.

**Saudi Arabia:** over the last two weeks executions have been taking place almost daily in Saudi Arabia after the authorities ended a 21-month unofficial moratorium on the use of the death penalty for drug-related offenses.

**Japan:** it is applied in practice only for aggravated murder, although it is also a legal penalty for certain crimes against the state, such as treason and military insubordination, as well as kidnapping resulting in death.

**Somalia:** most of executions in Somalia are through shooting, but Sharia courts also used beheading and stoning.

**South Sudan:** allows for executions of individuals to occur in the event of convictions for numerous crimes including murder and terrorism. The sentences can be imposed by either civilian courts or the military.

**Democratic Republic of Congo:** death penalties are regularly handed down but systematically commuted to life imprisonment.



## POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Does the Death Penalty truly prevent crime?
2. Is there a humane and painless way to execute a person?
3. Don't victims of violent crime and their families have a right to justice?
4. If you kill someone else, don't you deserve to die, too – “an eye for an eye”?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty/>