



CAPITAL PUNISHMENT



COMMITTEE: HUMAN RIGHTS

Capital punishment is the practice of executing someone as a punishment for a specific crime after a legal trial. There is controversy surrounding the issue of capital punishment and its ethics. One of the main advocates for the abolishment of capital punishment is Amnesty International who have been working towards abolishing executions since 1977. To date they have managed to abolish the death penalty in 140 countries. However, many major powers in the world still use the death penalty. These countries include: China, the United States, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Capital punishment breaches two essential human rights: the right to life and the right to live free from torture (protected under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN in 1948). Amnesty believes that murder is never the solution which is why they are so against capital punishment.

Many believe that capital punishment should be completely abolished because the risk of executing an innocent person can never be eliminated. Execution is an ultimate punishment that cannot be reversed which is why many find it appalling that it is used so freely in several countries. A prime example of this is in the USA where since 1973, 150 prisoners on death row have been exonerated, however, many others will have been executed despite there being serious doubts about whether they are guilty or not.

Furthermore, the death penalty is often used in combination with justice systems that are unfair or skewed. A number of countries with the highest execution rates are known to issue death sentences after unfair trials including China, Iran and Iraq. In Iran and Sudan, capital punishment is also used to punish political opponents which implies that capital punishment can also be used as a form of political control.

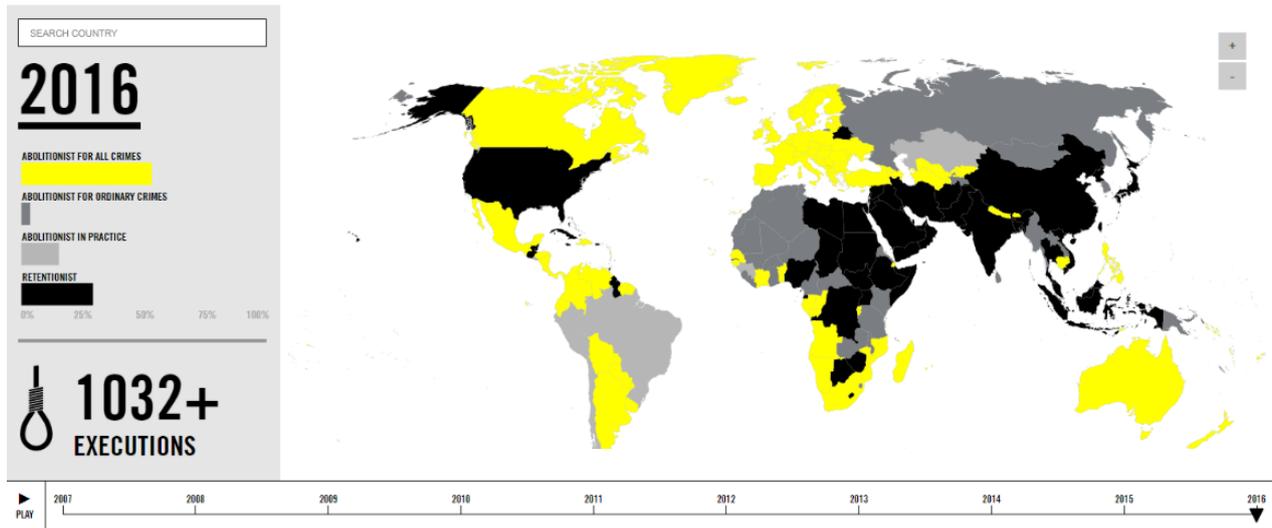
However, many disagree and say that capital punishment is useful in controlling crime in their countries because the knowledge that the death penalty is an option deters people from committing crimes. In addition, capital punishment gives society the option to permanently remove the worst criminals, meaning they cannot reoffend, leaving behind a warning to others.

Economic implications of incarceration are also considered when arguing for capital punishment. It is more economically effective to execute criminals rather than spending money on the maintenance of prisons when the money could be used to provide social care for society.

There is also the debate as to whether it is possible to rehabilitate criminals or if rehabilitation is not possible for some people due to their genetic disposition. It stages the question of whether capital punishment is right for everyone or whether some people should be given a chance to be rehabilitated.

To consider

- What are the economic implications of maintaining or abolishing capital punishment?
- If capital punishment is abolished, how will the UN ensure that member states do not continue carrying out executions?
- What are the human rights being breached and do they outweigh the benefits of capital punishment?



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

- Yellow countries do not allow capital punishment.
- Dark grey countries reserve the death penalty for serious crimes only.
- Light grey countries retain the death penalty in law but have not executed for at least 10 years.
- Black countries retain the death penalty.