

The Death Penalty Is Not A Deterrent

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Capital Punishment, Human Rights, and the Claim of Deterrence

Every human being is born with some inalienable rights. The right to life is the first and foremost right of every person. There are some circumstances that lead people to commit crimes, and certain states punish them with the death penalty to deter crime. Capital punishment is one of their fundamental human right, which is the right to life. Various human rights groups have advocated for the abolishment of the death penalty. Many innocent people became victims of this horrible punishment. However, crime still prevails in many countries that have imposed the death penalty in their criminal justice system. I intend to prove that the death penalty does not mitigate the crime rate in society. This paper explores the dangers of the death penalty and how it results in wrong consequences.

This topic is examined further in [The Consequences Of Death Penalty](#).

Firstly, the death penalty does not end various economic, social and political problems which evoke people to commit crimes. The fundamental social problems that increase the crime rate are racial discrimination, gender discrimination, income inequality and a weak judicial system. Some people, especially the minority communities, are in desperate situations that blur their thinking ability. The crime rate increased significantly in the aftermath of the financial crisis in Korea in the 1990s, and the researchers concluded that economic reasons were the primary cause of the crime rate. If a country wants to end crime and violence, then it should address the social and financial issues that plague the country. Without eliminating those socioeconomic reasons, the crime rate cannot be controlled.

Evidence Against the Deterrent Effect of the Death Penalty

The proponents of the death penalty believe that the fear of a harsh punishment would deter potential criminals from criminal and violent behavior. This belief is not in line with the reality. Daniel Nagin researched the prospect of the death penalty on possible criminal actions, and he found that “Nothing is known about how potential murderers perceive their risk of punishment.” Liptak stated that the people who commit crimes do not think rationally. When they are unable to perceive the immorality of their actions, how can they comprehend the consequences of their actions on their own life? Most of the people who commit crimes are not afraid of the consequences of their actions due to mental instability. Furthermore, criminals are more concerned with the danger of being caught rather

than being executed. They fear imprisonment more than they fear death. (Liptak, n.d.)

The developing states impose the death penalty to decrease the cost of imprisonment. In the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte promised to end the drug trade by using extreme measures. Six thousand people suspected of drug trade have been killed by the state since the election of President Rodrigo Duterte. However, the reason for crimes in these countries is injustice and political manipulation. The people who commit violent crimes have connections in the political and judicial arena to save themselves from the death penalty. Moreover, they hire young, poor individuals who are desperate for money to commit crimes. Thus, the actual perpetrators of the crimes get away with murders, and those who lack any political influence get targeted for the crimes. There are plenty of people who are ready to replace the young members of gangs who get caught, and the crime rates remain the same despite the executions.

The criminologists have expertise in understanding the motives [behind the crime](#), and they have concluded that the death penalty does not deter the crime; in the USA, a survey was conducted to determine whether the death penalty can deter crime, and 88% of criminologists were of the opinion that it does not. The most brutal crime in a society is murder. The criminologists also said that the death penalty does not affect the rate of crime in the community. In the case of the death penalty imposed on the members of terrorists, there is strong retribution from the terrorist network to show their resilience and power. Thus, there are no particular reasons left for the imposition of the death penalty in the judicial system and laws.

The researchers have researched to determine whether the death penalty can deter crime, and they have found no credible evidence to support it. Ehrenfreund stated that the crime rate has considerably fallen in the states that have banned the death penalty. Moreover, the crime rate was studied in New York from 1995 to 2004, and it was found that cases of homicide were unaffected by capital punishment. In another research, the crime rate in Hong Kong and Singapore was compared. The death penalty is banned in Hong Kong, and it is a necessary punishment for serious offenses in Singapore. The researchers concluded that there was no difference in crime rates in both cities. (Ehrenfreund, n.d.)

International Cases and the Failure of Harsh Punishment

Singapore had imposed the death penalty on drug traffickers to counter the rising drug trade. It was harshly criticized by human rights organizations for this terrible punishment. However, the extent of the drug trade did not change. The drug traffickers started recruiting children and teenagers for the drug trade as they were exempted from the death penalty. Thus, the government failed to decrease the drug trade even after adopting this harsh measure. Phneah noted that Singapore abolished the death penalty for drug traffickers in 2013 due to international criticism and ineffective in curbing drug trade and substance abuse. (Phneah, n.d.)

The people who support capital punishment also assume that the death penalty is less costly than life imprisonment. However, in California, 4 billion dollars were spent to execute thirteen individuals. This amount can be used to recruit around 80,000 members of the police force who can deter crime. Moreover, almost half of the convicted offenders do not have the resources to hire legal counsel, which increases the risk of unfair trial and punishment, whereas the actual criminals remain at large. The supporters of the death penalty have cited various surveys that show that ordinary people want the government to uphold the death penalty for their security, but Richard reported that “Death penalty support becomes a minority opinion when the public is presented with a variety of alternative sentences.”

The death penalty is meant to eliminate the source of crime in the society. However, there is significant collateral damage to executions due to the death penalty. The families of the people who die because of the death penalty can face many emotional, mental, and financial challenges and struggles. The grave punishment suffered by their close ones can make them hostile to the government and judicial system. This can result in radicalized and violent behavior. Moreover, the financial hardships faced by the family of the criminal, as well as the societal humiliation, can spur negative emotions and evoke substance abuse. The security risk increases due to these factors. Thus, by eliminating one source of crime, more sources of crime are brought into the society, which can spur the crime rate.

Political Abuse and the Broader Case Against Capital Punishment

The argument that the death penalty is meant to deter crimes ignores the fact that, in most cases, the death penalty is used for political persecution rather than as a limitation on crime. Recently, the death penalty was reinstated in Turkey in the aftermath of the failed attempt of the coup. The government targeted thousands of people, including journalists, lawyers, and academics, as a consequence and executed many due to its political motives rather than to curb crime. Most of the journalists and academics who have been targeted by the government were advocating the human rights of the citizens of Turkey. There is more danger of crime and violence when the people who were defending the brutality of the government have been executed. The crime rate is not going to decrease but increase in this scenario.

The international NGOs like Amnesty International ardently campaign to urge more states to ban the death penalty. In 2016, more than one thousand people were executed because the death penalty is acceptable in their political system. The European Union has set the condition for the abolition of the death penalty for its membership due to the highly questionable legitimacy of this punishment. There is a pressing need for reform in the criminal justice system. Due to the failure of the death penalty to deter crime, the countries that have adopted it in their political system would abolish it immediately and grant a reprieve to the people who are convicted. Moreover, the government should reform gun

laws to ensure the safety of the citizens. The availability of guns increases the risk of violence, which should be checked by the government.

The above-mentioned reasons show that the death penalty does not deter crime. The illegitimacy of the claim that the death penalty deters crime is backed by significant research and facts. It is a violation of the principles of liberty and equality. It can exacerbate the circumstances which are the actual cause of violence in a country. The ideal way should be to provide counseling to the people who committed a crime in a difficult situation. Moreover, many criminologists have noted that life imprisonment would be a better deterrent to crime rather than the death penalty. Society is saved from the brutality of the death penalty, as well as the fear of violence when criminals are kept in prison. Thus, life imprisonment is a better way to deal with crime rates.

Works Cited

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