



Briefing Paper: The Question of the Death Penalty

In modern society, we see much less Capital punishment than we would have done across the Globe say, 200 years ago. However, it is still a key ethical and human rights question, especially topical due to the recent attempted introduction of the Death Penalty for homosexual intersex in Brunei, which in the end, due to widespread international condemnation was not followed through.

Proponents of the death penalty argue that for certain crimes, a penalty lower than death would be disproportionate to the heinousness of the crimes committed. According to numerous studies, it also seems, arguably, to be an effective deterrent in the long term to commit the crimes that people receive capital punishment for. Using a variety of samples and statistical methods, one can find a strong link between executions and reduced murder rates, therefore saving lives in the long run. Some argue that regardless of future benefits, we justify punishment because it is deserved, and that opponents mistakenly equate revenge and retribution, as they both inflict pain and suffering on those who have inflicted pain and suffering on others. The difference, they say, is clear: revenge knows no bounds whereas retribution must be proportional and appropriately directed so that the retributive punishment fits the crime.

Opponents of the death penalty argue that the removal of it undoubtedly leads to a healthier society. They contend that there is no credible evidence that shows that capital punishment decreases the homicide rate, stating that any criminal who thought he would be caught would find the prospect of life imprisonment without possibility of bail a monumentally fear-inducing penalty; any criminal who didn't think he would be caught would be untroubled by any sanction. They further argue that no national interest can justify human rights violations such as the death penalty. They often use the example that in America in the last few years over 150 people have been taken off death row for they were innocent, leading to the inescapable conclusion that innocent people have been executed.

These are just a few of the arguments that dominate the debate on the death penalty that I hope will be of use to all delegates.

Key points to consider:

What is your nation's view on the death penalty?

For which crimes should it be enforced?

Is the death penalty a violation of human rights?

Should it be considered retribution or revenge?

Should the views of the victim's loved ones be considered?