



Topic: Guaranteeing the protection of rights of those facing death penalty.

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Being the principal human rights committee in the United Nations, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is in charge of promoting and protecting the human rights of people worldwide. The OHCHR's goal is to ensure a future in which the rights and freedoms given to human beings are enjoyed and respected, as well as to safe keep the three base pillars of the United Nations, these being peace and security, human rights, and development.

It is also the committee's work to help governments to execute their obligations as countries to protect their citizens' rights and supports those who are claiming their rights, as well as stand objectively when reporting a violation to human rights.

The second topic to be talked about is guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, death penalty, or capital punishment, is defined as "death as a punishment given by a court of law for very serious crimes". Depending on the country and the state, in some cases, death penalty is approved or not.

It is important to identify those countries that allow death penalty to be applied in their courts: Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, United States, Iran, Japan, Taiwan, Kuwait, Zimbabwe, Libya, Thailand, Guyana, Uganda, Bangladesh, Iraq, Indonesia, Botswana, United Arab Emirates, Bahamas, Cuba, Belarus, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Syria, Egypt, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, China, Sudan, Comoros, Somalia, Barbados, Malaysia, Chad, Pakistan, Oman, Singapore, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Bahrain, North Korea, Equatorial Guinea, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Palestinian territories, Trinidad and Tobago, Lesotho, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica and Jordan.

According to Cornell Law School, globally and nowadays, there are nine common execution methods, which are hanging, shooting by firing squad, shooting, beheading, lethal injection, stoning, gas chamber, electrocution, and falling from an unknown height. Sixty countries authorize hanging, which makes it the most common authorized method. The United States authorizes electrocution and gas chamber methods, and Iran is the only country that authorizes pushing those condemned from an unknown height. The same article states that twenty-eight countries authorize shooting by firing squad and twenty-two more authorize shooting. "Many countries do not clarify the distinction between shooting by firing squad and shooting", they explain, "but some countries indicate that shooting by firing squad includes multiple shots fired by multiple people while shooting includes a single shot to the back of the head."

The Death Penalty Information Center in the United States informs that, in the country, 33 states authorize lethal injection, 9 states authorize electrocution, 6 states authorize lethal

gas, 3 states authorize hanging, and other 3 states authorize shooting by firing squad, all states having lethal injection as a primary option. We can conclude that in the United States the most common method is lethal injection.

While death penalty is to be applied only to adults, Amnesty International has recollected data that indicates that, since 1990, there have been 145 executions of child offenders in the following countries: China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Sudan, the USA and Yemen.

Amnesty International has also reported that, in 2018, most executions took place in China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and Iraq, China being the top executioner, though with unknown exact data, since their numbers are classified as a state secret. Globally, around 690 executions took place, excluding the unknown number of Chinese executions.

In the International Standards of Death Penalty, compiled by Amnesty International, the right of life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment are emphasized. In 1990 the Hungarian Constitutional Court declared that death penalty violates the "inherent right to life and human dignity". The South African Constitutional Court declared death penalty to be incompatible with the prohibition of "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" under the country's interim constitution."

According to the articles two and three of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the General Assembly in Paris on December the 10th of 1948, "everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind" and "everyone has the right to life" and some documents that have been adopted to ban death penalty are The Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Protocol No. 6 to the European Convention on Human Rights, Protocol No. 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights and The Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights to Abolish the Death Penalty among others.

Quoting a Medium article, "The purpose of punishment is to change the perpetrators but death punishment teaches them nothing; [...] it does not teach the criminals or change them because their lives are put to an end." According to Amnesty International, there is no evidence that the death penalty is any more effective in reducing crime than life imprisonment.

As members of this committee, you are responsible for assuring international measures for people on death row. Some viable solutions we can offer are the following:

- "We should launch a campaign of death row family members and members of groups like Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation to challenge the US at the United Nations", as suggested by Martina Correira, sister of a death row convicted.
- "Showing the human side of those incarcerated [to] develop a culture that is intolerant of the use of the death penalty", proposed by Marlene Martin, executive director of Campaign to End Death Penalty.

Resources:

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