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**The death penalty**

# Is the death penalty in keeping with the times?

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## **1.Introduction**

### **1.1 Structure of my work**

I structured my work as follows:

In my introduction I have two subitems. The first is “Why I chose the death penalty for my project”. In this subitem I tell why the death penalty is interesting for me and of course why I chose this theme for my project. The second subitem is “Structure of my work”, here I am writing down what you`re able to read in the following texts.

The second bulled point is “About the death penalty”. For this bullet point I have three subitems. The first is “Death penalty, capital punishment or death sentence”. I wrote down what the death penalty is, and I wrote a little bit about the history of the death penalty. The following subitems are “The countries who have the death penalty” and “The methods which are actually used for execution”. I think the titles speak for themselves.

The third bullet point is “Different views to the death penalty” where I write about the arguments for and against the death penalty, which are the first and second subitems. I want to give my assessment to the arguments so that`s the third point. And the last subitem refer on my central question “Is the death penalty in keeping with the times?” and it`s called “Is the death penalty still up-to date?”.

The last bullet point is “My opinion and conclusion”. The subitems are “My opinion about the death penalty” and “Personal conclusion”.

### **1.2 Why I chose the death penalty**

Last year I went to an event organized by Amnesty International. They showed the film “Dead man walking”, it`s about a man who killed a teenage couple. The man was sentenced to death and he waited 6 years in death row.

The film shows the life of the killer and the life of the relatives of the murdered couple. The story of the film really happened and that makes the film even harder.

Since I saw the film I became involved in Amnesty International. I think human rights are essential. I want to learn more about the death penalty and that's why I chose this topic.

For me the film gives rise to the question “Is the death penalty in keeping with the times?”. So, I decided to use this as my central question.

## **2.About the death penalty**

### **2.1 Death penalty, capital punishment or death sentence**

The death penalty, capital punishment or death sentence are all synonyms for a criminal is punished with death by the government.

The death penalty is a heavy punishment for crimes like murderer, rape, treason etc. In some countries also for smaller crimes like stealing. It means that the murderer, rapist etc. is sentenced to death.

If the delinquents are guilty or not, will be determined in judicial procedures. Sometimes the judicial procedures are official, mostly as a deterrent. Legal fundamentals should be the requirement of a judicial procedure.

The death penalty is practiced since ever. Back in the years justice was spoken in according to the proverb “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”.

And the death penalty is practiced everywhere where the government thinks that they can choose who should live and who shouldn't live. In the past there were different kinds of sentence someone to death. Most of them were brutal.

## 2.2 The countries who have the death penalty

This graphic shows which countries have the death penalty. All countries had the death penalty in 2012 shows in red. The orange colours show which countries have abolished the death penalty in practice. The yellow coloured countries abolished it for common offences and the green countries abolished it completely. The graphic is from the German “Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung“ in 2012.

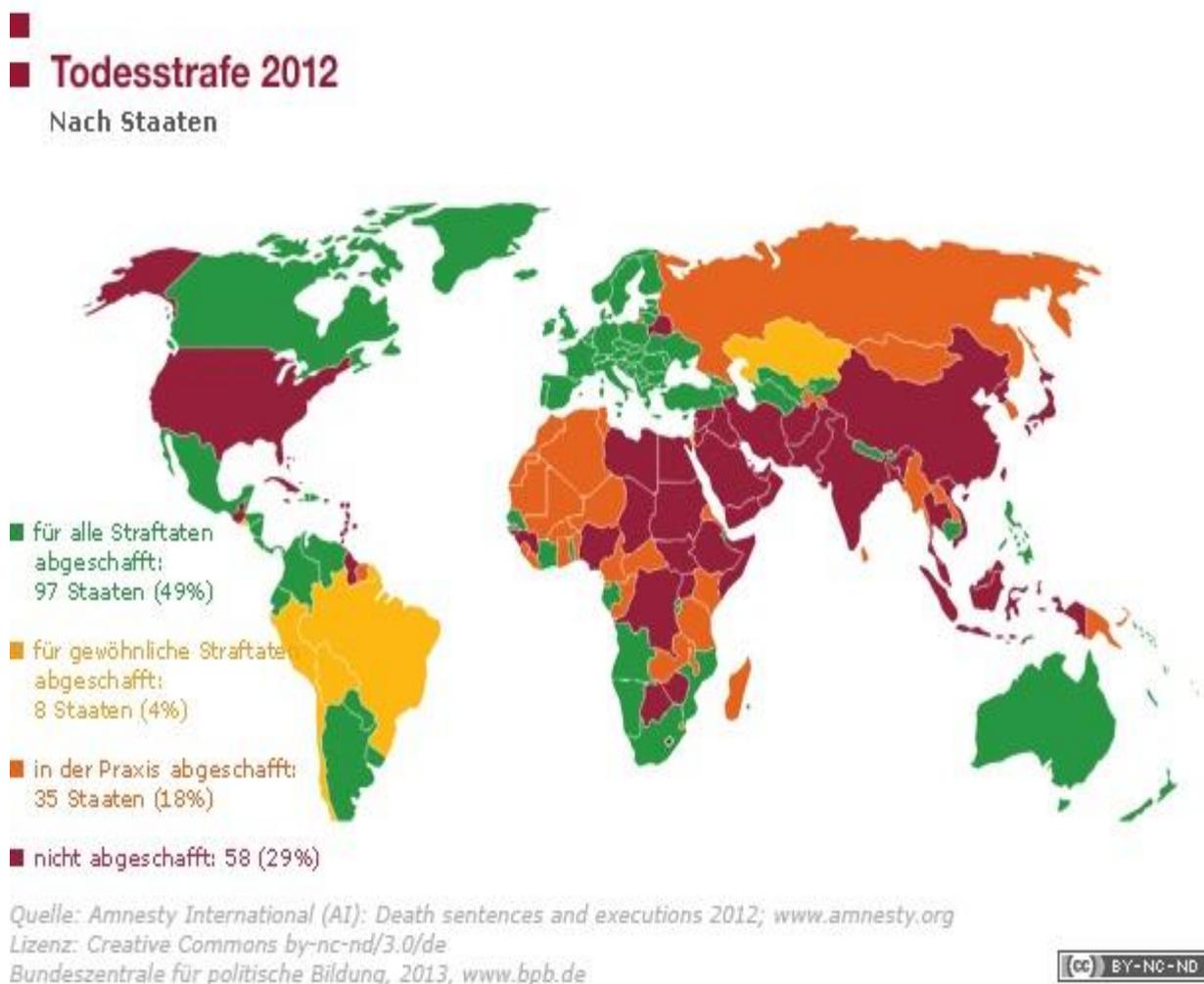


Abb1.

## 2.3 Methods used for execution

The 35 countries (2012) who have the death penalty and doesn't abolished it in practice use methods like hanging, shooting, beheading, lethal injections, stoning, gas chamber, electrocution. Some countries let the people fall from an unknown height to make the death horrible for the offender.

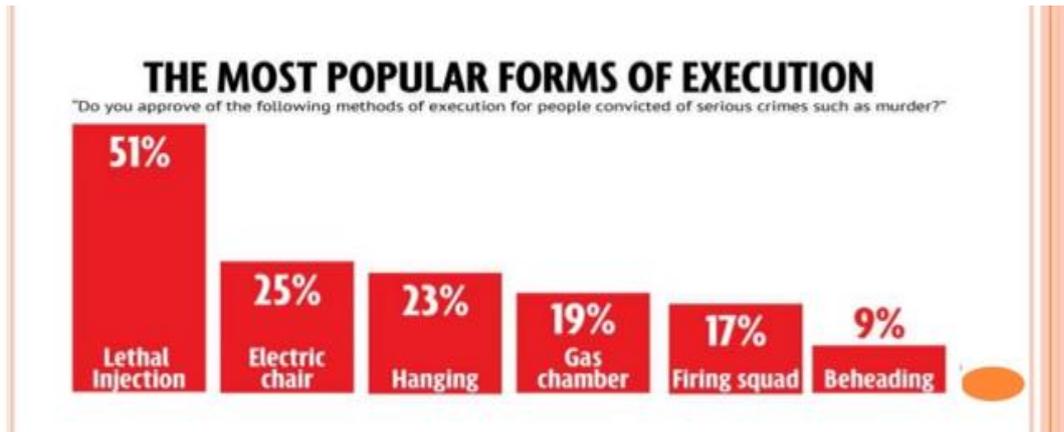


Abb.2

In the US it's possible to watch the executions of other people. Recently there were some problems with the toxin of lethal injections.

In the caricature below, you can see a police officer who explained to the audience: "Folks, recent inmates haven't died right away, often gasping and struggling for hours, so we added a snack bar..."

The caricature indicates the problem with the toxin of lethal injections.



Abb.3

### **3. Different views to the death penalty**

#### **3.1 Arguments for the death penalty**

There are people who say that a lifelong imprisonment is more inhuman than a quick death.

Also, some people say that the taxpayers don't want to pay for all the bad people that are imprisoned lifelong. Sentence someone to death is cheaper than keep him in a prison for years.

In countries where the death penalty is abolished, some people who are imprisoned for life will get released for good behavior after 20 years and then they could murder, rape or do all the bad things they've done before. But the governments can prevent that with the death penalty.

*“If someone murders someone else, they have given up their human rights, including the one to stay alive themselves.”* (BBC, 2011)

Apart from this the government must set a signal to prevent murder etc. the death penalty could be this signal, it will stop the criminals and the future criminals. In countries which had the death penalty and then abolished it, the crime levels get higher than before. That proves the death penalty acts as a deterrent.

The death penalty helps to make our community safer. It acts as a deterrent and prevents repeat offenders.

Positive aspects are also that the offender is released from the guilt of his crime when he's dead.

It's an equitable retribution for the relatives of the victims. Revenge is not the right thing but “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”.

In many countries the people are for the death penalty. In a democracy, the politics must do what their citizens want. That's why the politics thinks it's all right.

### **3.2 Arguments against the death penalty**

One of the most popular argument why the death penalty should be abolished is, that nobody has the right to consider if other people live or not.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that there are judicial errors. It is possible that a court decision is false. So, the government sentence innocent people to death. Once someone is dead, it is irreversible. For most of the opponents the death penalty is retrograding.

Many religions say that "You shall not kill" for example the Christianity in the fifth commandment. An important argument is that the first human right means that everyone has the right to live. No regime should think that it is above human rights. For example, the death penalty is forbidden in the European convention of human rights.

Sentence someone to death is disrespectful to human life. And, an inhuman treatment for those who are sentenced to death because often they must wait days, weeks or longer to the day of their execution.

Beside that the humanity of capital punishment isn't worth to be discussed.

And a dead offender doesn't bring the dead victim back.

I know the family of the murdered victim is destroyed but also the family of the offenders destroys when the offender is death, they won't get a happy moment again.

A better opportunity than the death penalty could be forced sterilization. Forced sterilization is a good idea for determent. Because the most people want to have children and then that's impossible. After the forced sterilization the offender must live the rest of his live with the guilt of his crime and the consequences of his crime which would be that he can't have children.

With the death penalty the offender is released from his guilt when he's dead.

Without the death penalty he would have to live the rest of his live with the guilt of his crime.

### 3.3 My Assessment to the arguments

I compare arguments for the death penalty and arguments against the death penalty. And summarise my own opinion with some of the arguments that I mentioned above.

First, I want to react to an argument for the death penalty. Some people say that they, the taxpayers, don't want to pay for all the bad people that are imprisoned lifelong.

I think that's a stupid argument because they must pay the taxes one way or another. If their taxes pay criminals who aren't sentenced to death or the ones who will be sentenced to death, that's very complicated, but I think it wouldn't make a real difference. Also, the government owns the taxes and not the taxpayer.

The argument against the death penalty, a dead murderer doesn't bring the dead victim back is true. That argument also includes the fact that the death is irretrievable. What brings me to the conclusion that the death penalty is unacceptable because it's possible that the court decision is false. One false decision may cause the death of an innocent human being.

When I compare the argument that a dead murderer is a murderer less in our world and the argument that the dead murderer could be innocent, I'm against the death penalty because I think 20 or more years in a prison are enough to change a human, so he won't do something bad again.

Maybe it's just because the human does not want to go back to prison again but I think that's acceptable.

I'm happy to live in Bremen which abolished the death penalty.



Abb.4

### 3.4 Is the death penalty still up to date?

Since December 1948 the United Nations pronounced the human rights. The human rights recognise the right to life of every human. Also, they recognise the right of everyone to live without torture and degrading treatment, so the death penalty violates these rights.

The governments use the death penalty to intimidate the people and to fight against crimes. But we had the death penalty since ages of years and the crime levels hadn't been restored to an acceptable level. The criminality turned out even more brutal in the last years. What you can see at the last attack in the US state Texas where a man shot 27 people, including himself, in a church because of a family dispute. The death penalty only distracts from the fact that we must think about strategies to fight the causes of criminality.

In our sophisticated civilization all countries should abolish the death penalty. The death penalty don't solve our problems.

*„Statt Gewalt zu verhindern, könnten Hinrichtungen vielmehr als Rechtfertigung für Vergeltungsmaßnahmen und damit für noch mehr Gewalt benutzt werden. Staaten, die auf die Todesstrafe zur Terrorismusbekämpfung setzen, betreiben hiermit in erster Linie Symbolpolitik. Es muss befürchtet werden, dass sich dieser Trend künftig noch verstärkt.“* (Hendrich, Oliver; 12.9.2016)

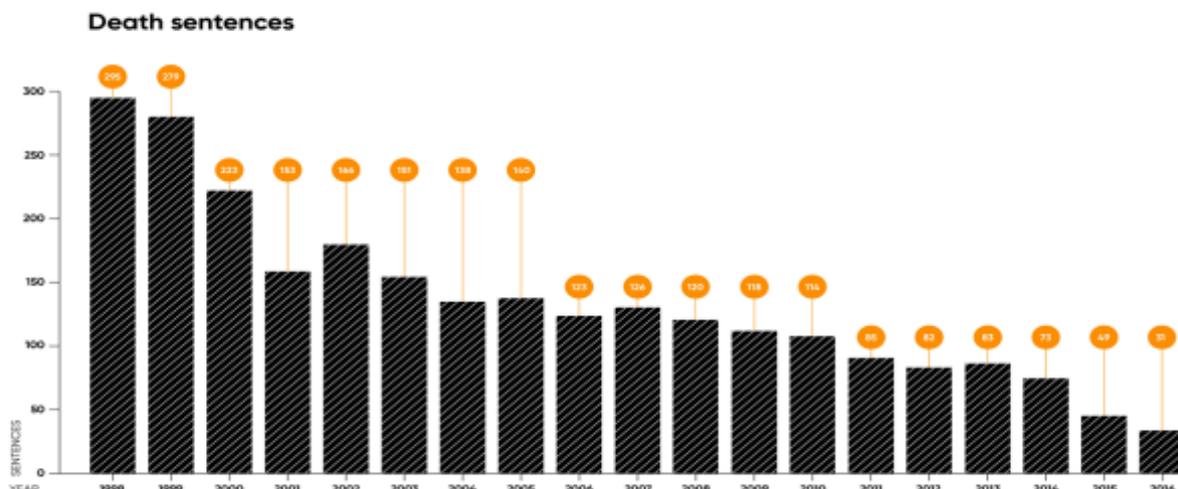


Abb.5 The graphic shows that the number of executions has been dropping constantly since 1998.

## **4. My opinion and conclusion**

### **4.1 My opinion about the death penalty**

I think the death penalty should be abolished worldwide. The death penalty is an inhumane treatment, and no one solve a not natural death.

Capital punishment is there to intimidate people and to make the appearance of a good and well-functioning system. But it isn't because no one has the right to sentence someone to death. The regime doesn't have the right to murder.

That's my opinion because I believe the human rights. And the human rights say that.

### **4.2 Personal conclusion**

I want to answer on my central question “Is the death penalty in keeping with the times?”. Based on the information I summarised in the subitem 3.4 “Is the death penalty still up to date?” (page 9).

I don't think that the death penalty is in keeping with the times. The potential mental problems of every involved person are unacceptable.

Furthermore, in our modern society where everything is networked, and anything is spreading around the world in seconds, are wrong decisions like sentencing innocent people to death, associate with a lot of risks. Risks that no government should take.

The regimes shouldn't make this harsh mistake because they must preserve the authorities to structure their different members of the public. Because if they don't beware their authority's, when they make too much or too wrong decisions, the citizens can't trust the regimes and then a small hitch from outside could collapse the system.

In summary, the death penalty brings a big risk with it. The risk to murder innocent people which might take the risk of a collapse of the system.

So, I think this risk and potential mental problems of every involved person shows that the death penalty isn't in keeping with the time.

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