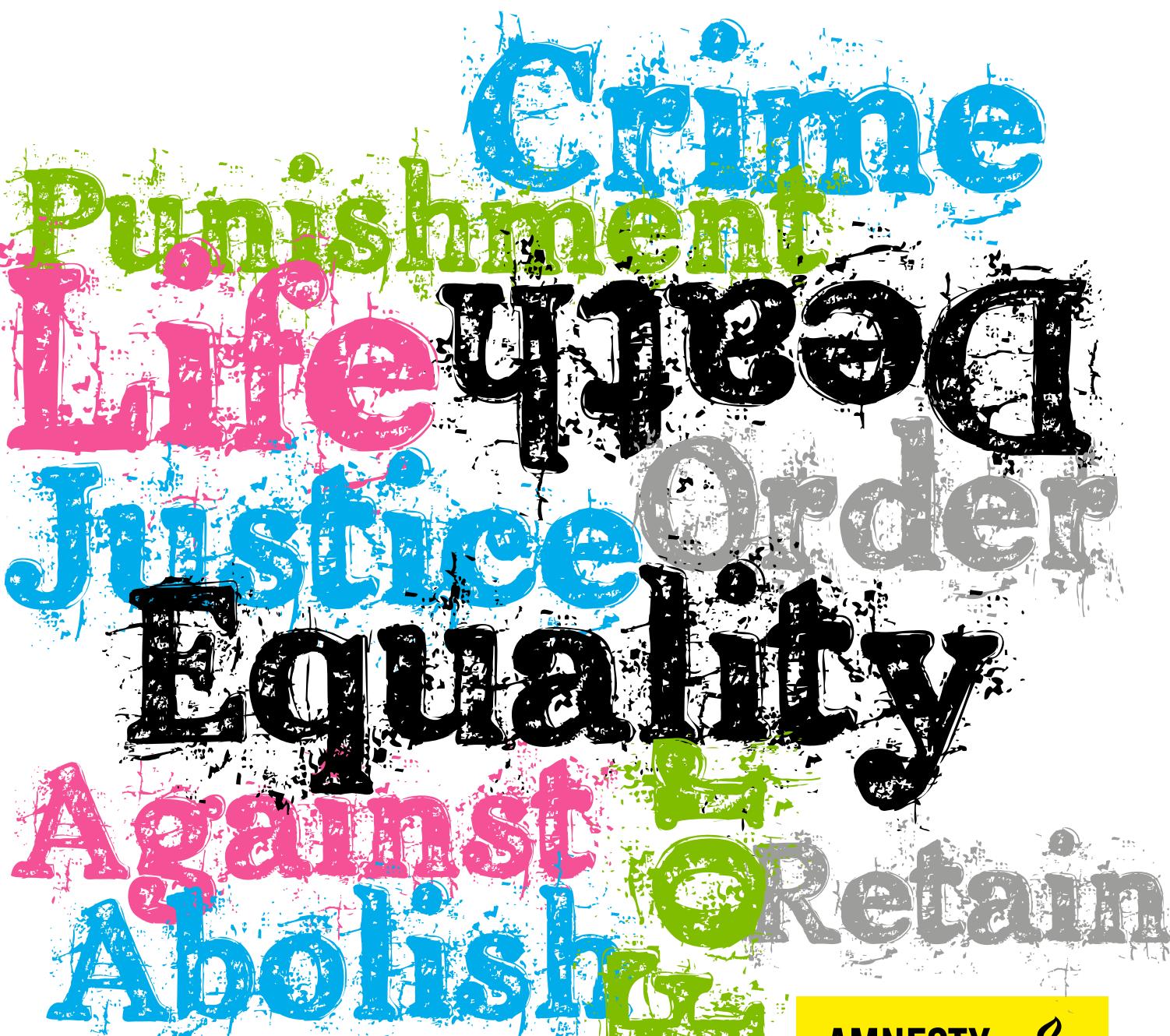


# **LEARNING ABOUT THE DEATH PENALTY**

A teaching pack to help students aged 14+ explore issues surrounding the use of the death penalty



**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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# INTRODUCTION

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Every day, people are executed and sentenced to death by the state as punishment for a variety of crimes. In some countries it can be for drug-related offences, in others it is reserved for terrorism-related acts and murder.

There has been an overall drop in the use of the death penalty around the world, but many countries use it regularly and at least 19,336 people (as of the end of 2018) are known to be on death row, often not knowing when their sentence will be carried out.

Although many organisations including Amnesty International oppose the death penalty without exception, this resource is designed to be balanced and facilitate open debate and discussion for and against the death penalty for students aged 14+.

It includes activities and facts to explore the death penalty. It looks at the arguments in favour and against, and asks how capital punishment has become a human rights issue. Students can also examine the impact of living on death row and consider whether it is fair to sentence children to death.

The resource includes an assembly script and debate. It also uses films, case studies and data for young people to write about.

## How to use this resource

There are seven lessons and a play script for an assembly. Lessons can be stand-alone or used in succession. There are also six activities or mini-lessons to open up discussion in different subject areas (eg RE, literacy, drama, history, PHSE and citizenship).

We suggest encouraging students to write down what they learn, including facts, group discussion questions and responses. At various points during the activities students will be asked to reconsider their opinion on the death penalty: has it changed as a result of what they have learned?

Lesson timings are only a suggestion and depend on the students and the length of their discussion. Some activities could easily run over two lessons. The resource can be used any time during the school year, although key dates include World Day against the Death Penalty (10 October) and Human Rights Day (10 December). You can also link Lesson 5 to Black History Month (October).

## Teaching sensitive material

The materials are designed to be suitable for students aged 14+ and reflect a range of beliefs about the death penalty. It is a controversial and emotional topic, and the resource contains powerful, sensitive and sometimes upsetting content. Reinforce class rules around sensible and respectful discussion and give content warnings where needed to ensure that students are aware of potentially upsetting material. Respond to student reactions, questions and beliefs, and work in a rights respecting way that supports self-expression and debate.



# **Amnesty International's position on the death penalty**

In 1977, Amnesty's campaign to abolish the death penalty began. Amnesty held the first global anti-death penalty conference in Sweden, attended by more than 200 people from 57 countries. It led to the 'Stockholm Declaration' calling on all governments 'to bring about the immediate and total abolition of the death penalty'. Only 16 countries had abolished the death penalty at this point. Today, 142 countries (more than two-thirds) have abolished it in law or practice.

Since then Amnesty has worked on many cases – for example, in 2018, the death sentences of 14 prisoners in Benin were commuted after we, among others, campaigned for them. We have published a widely-referenced annual statistical report since 1979 and have become a key global authority on monitoring and reporting on global death sentences and executions. We also advocate for abolition at the national level. Highlights include the historic vote in December 2015 by the parliament in Mongolia for a new criminal code removing the death penalty, after 21 years of relentless campaigning. The new code came into force on 1 July 2017.

Amnesty is against the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the crime or whether someone is guilty or innocent. We are actively working to end its use everywhere.

This is because:

- This is because:

  - 1) The death penalty violates human rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the right to life (Article 3) and the right not to be tortured (Article 5).
  - 2) Evidence shows that it does not deter crime. There is no evidence that the death penalty is any more effective in reducing crime than imprisonment.
  - 3) It is irreversible, and mistakes happen. Since 1973, more than 160 US death row prisoners have been exonerated completely for their crimes. Who knows how many have been executed for a crime they did not commit?
  - 4) It is often used in countries that have unfair justice systems. For example, China and Iran issue death sentences following unfair trials and after obtaining ‘confessions’ through torture.
  - 5) It discriminates. The death penalty disproportionately affects members of racial, ethnic and religious minorities, as well as those living in poverty.



Talking about human rights in the classroom

## **Do something now**

There are many ways that young people can get involved in Amnesty. Our youth groups in the UK are mostly based in schools and help develop the skills needed to campaign for human rights and allow young people to realise they have a voice. See how to join or set up an Amnesty youth group at [amnesty.org.uk/youth](https://amnesty.org.uk/youth)

Teachers can join TeachRights to receive free teaching resources, news and ideas at [amnesty.org.uk/teachrights](https://amnesty.org.uk/teachrights)

Finally, whether talking on the death penalty or children's rights, an Amnesty speaker will bring different human rights themes to life. Invite one of our trained speakers to deliver workshops, lessons and assemblies at [amnesty.org.uk/speakers](https://amnesty.org.uk/speakers)

## **Acknowledgements**

This resource has been created by Amnesty International UK. Special thanks to Amnesty's Teacher Advisory Group for their support in developing it.

Uploaded by Amnesty International UK  
January 2020

# LESSON 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE DEATH PENALTY

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What do students know about the death penalty? After exploring facts on the subject, students take a quiz, discuss statistics and vote on whether they support or reject the death penalty.

**Timings** 60 minutes

- Aims**
- To gain an understanding of the death penalty
  - To examine facts and statistics
  - To discuss their own opinions about the death penalty

**You'll need**  
Death penalty map (page 54)  
Death penalty quiz (one per student)  
Death penalty quiz answers (for teacher)

**Film clip:** Death sentences and executions 2017 ([amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty](http://amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty)) 2.26 minutes

**Starter 10 minutes** Ask students to come up with a definition of the death penalty. What do they know about the death penalty? Use the Death Penalty map on page 54 to provide background information and discuss. Ask students to vote on whether they support or reject the death penalty or are undecided (use voting ballot papers or a show of hands). Your students could also write a paragraph on their opinions and share them with the class.

**Activity 1 20 minutes** Hand out the death penalty quiz and ask students to answer the questions, individually or in pairs. Give them 10 minutes. Review the answers as a class and use the think points on the answer sheet to facilitate class discussion. What did they find surprising?

**Activity 2 20 minutes** Remaining in pairs, ask students to name the top six countries that used the death penalty in 2018. Ask them to justify their guesses then read out the answers below. Is it a surprise to them? Why?

## Answers

China 1,000s but figure unknown as they are classified as a state secret

Iran 253+

Saudi Arabia 149

Viet Nam 85+

Iraq 52+

Egypt 43+

Now read the list of crimes below. In pairs, give them two minutes to decide on what punishments they think were given for each crime. How many of the 10 crimes do they think led to the death penalty? Review their answers then explain that every crime on the list led to a death sentence somewhere in the world in 2018. How do they feel about this? Just or unjust? Why?

## Crimes

Drug-related crimes

Adultery

Kidnapping

Participation in a terrorist organisation or act

Rape

Spying  
Threats to national security  
Corruption  
Questioning a leader's policies  
Blasphemy (including insulting God or the Prophet)

Show them the clip about the death penalty referenced in the 'You'll need' section.

Staying in pairs, ask them to write down as many pieces of information about the death penalty as they can while the clip plays. Share the information with the pair next to you. What does it tell you about the status of the death penalty globally?

Amnesty updates its figures annually at [amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty](https://amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty). This site includes data back to 2007. On an interactive map, students can compare the number of death sentences handed down in 2018 and the number of executions that took place. They can also see how the number of countries carrying out executions has changed since 2007. What does it reveal? Make pie charts or bar graphs to show findings or create an infographic.

### **Plenary 5 minutes**

Are there any alternatives to the death penalty? If so, for which crimes? Can students express and justify their personal points of view? Ask them to vote again on whether they support or reject the death penalty or are undecided (use voting ballot papers or a show of hands). Has anyone's opinion changed?

# LESSON 1 DEATH PENALTY QUIZ

Student name:

- 1 How many countries have abolished (or stopped using) the death penalty for all crimes by the end of 2018?

All (197) 106 74 (circle)

- 2 Which is the only European country to impose death sentences and carry out executions?

- 3 List the five most common methods of execution.

- 4 In 2018, how many recorded executions were there (excluding China)?  
At least:

223 690 1,463 (circle)

- 5 Why is that number likely to be higher? \_\_\_\_\_

- 6 How many people are currently on death row around the world?  
3,703 19,336 43,010 (circle)

- 7 Name the only country to abolish the death penalty in 2018.

- 8 How many US states still have the death penalty in law? \_\_\_\_\_

- 9 Which US state carried out the highest number of executions in 2018?

- 10 Which US state still uses the electric chair?  
Texas Florida Connecticut (circle)

- 11 Since 1973, 166 people have been released from death row in the US because they turned out to be innocent.  
True False (circle)

- 12 Around the world, how many people under 18 at the time of the offence were executed in 2018?

- 13 In what year did the UK formally abolish the death penalty for all crimes?  
1946 1998 2005 (circle)

- 14 On average, one execution takes place every nine hours. True False (circle)

# LESSON 1 DEATH PENALTY QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1 How many countries have abolished (or stopped using) the death penalty for all crimes by the end of 2018?**

**Answer:** 106 for all crimes.

142 countries (more than two-thirds) had abolished the death penalty in law and practice.

Abolitionist for ordinary crimes only 8

Abolitionist in practice 28

- 2 Which is the only European country to impose death sentences and carry out executions?**

**Answer:** Belarus. There were at least four executions and at least two death sentences in 2018.

**Think point:** Does it surprise you that the death penalty is used in only one European country? Why?

- 3 List the five most common methods of execution.**

**Answer:**

Beheading

Electrocution

Hanging

Lethal injection

Shooting

**Think point:** Why do you think these are the most common?

- 4 In 2018, how many recorded executions were there (excluding China)?**

**Answer:** 690. It's down 31 per cent from 2017 (at least 993 executions).

- 5 Why is that number likely to be higher?**

**Answer:** China remained the world's top executioner, carrying out more death sentences than the rest of the world combined – but figures remain classified as a state secret. Amnesty estimates that thousands of people are sentenced to death and executed each year.

- 6 How many people are currently on death row around the world?**

**Answer:** 19,336

**Think point:** Did you think the number would be higher or lower? Why?

- 7 Name the the only country to abolish the death penalty in 2018.**

**Answer:** Burkina Faso (Gambia and Malaysia both declared an official moratorium on executions).

- 8 How many US states still have the death penalty in law?**

**Answer:** 30 (it has been abolished in 20 states).

- 9 Which US state carried out the highest number of executions in 2018?**

**Answer:** Texas, where 13 out of 25 executions took place (Texas executed seven people in 2017).

- 10 Which US state still uses the electric chair?**

**Answer:** Florida

- 11 Since 1973, 166 people have been released from death row in the US because they turned out to be innocent. True or false?**

**Answer:** True

**Think point:** Does this change any of your views on the death penalty? Why?

- 12 Around the world, how many people were executed in 2018 who were under 18 at the time of the crime?**

**Answer:** Eight. Seven in Iran and one in South Sudan. Juvenile offenders remain on death row in Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and South Sudan. Since 1990 Amnesty has documented 145 executions of child offenders in 10 countries.

**Think point:** Executing juveniles for crimes they committed when they were under 18 is prohibited under international human rights law. Why do you think countries ignore these laws? What should be done to stop this practice?

- 13 In what year did the UK formally abolish the death penalty for all crimes?**

**Answer:** 1998, under the Human Rights Act, although the last execution in the UK was carried out in 1964. The Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965 suspended capital punishment for murder for five years. Parliament voted to make it permanent in 1969. But it did not apply to Northern Ireland, and it did not apply to other crimes punishable by death, such as treason and spying. The death penalty for murder was abolished in Northern Ireland in 1973.

- 14 On average, one execution takes place every nine hours. True or false?**

**Answer:** True. This excludes China where executions are believed to be in the thousands.

- 
- Every year Amnesty International produces a global report on the death penalty with updated statistics. Update these answers at [amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty/](http://amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty/)

**Sources:**

- Amnesty International Global Report Death Sentences and Executions 2018 published in April 2019 [amnesty.org.uk/dpreport-2018](http://amnesty.org.uk/dpreport-2018)
- Death Penalty Information Centre at [deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://deathpenaltyinfo.org)
- Amnesty International Executions of Juveniles since 1990 as of April 2019 [amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/0233/2019/en](http://amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/0233/2019/en)

# LESSON 2 THE DEATH PENALTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Is the death penalty a human rights violation? Students explore a human rights perspective before analysing arguments for and against the death penalty. On film, two people sentenced to death despite being innocent tell their stories, and students assess the impact of wrongful conviction.

**Timings** 60 minutes

- Aims**
- To demonstrate an understanding of universal human rights
  - To evaluate arguments for and against the death penalty
  - To consider wrongful conviction and its impact

**You'll need** Summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (one per student). See page 52.  
For and against the death penalty statements (for teacher)

**Film clips:** [oneforten.com/sabrina-butler](http://oneforten.com/sabrina-butler) (6.05 minutes)  
[oneforten.com/john-thompson](http://oneforten.com/john-thompson) (5.50 minutes)



## Starter 10 minutes

As a class, mind map rights all people are entitled to, keeping a list on the board. Distribute the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) summary with this resource. How does the class list compare to the rights on the UDHR? Why are there certain rights we missed, or certain rights we've chosen that are not on the UDHR?

Refer to Article 3 and Article 5. Now ask: do human rights apply to all people, even those convicted of crimes? What rights do they have? What rights does the death penalty take away? If life is a human right, how can countries continue to execute people?

## Activity 1 20 minutes

Tell students that they will move to one side of the room or the other based on whether they agree or disagree with arguments for and against the death penalty. They need to justify why they have made that decision about the argument. Set ground rules with students before they move. Pick from the for and against statements on page 13. Stop after each statement to take feedback on why students have chosen that side of the room. What makes the argument weak or strong? Can they improve it? How?

**Teaching note:** See death penalty statements handout on page 13.

## Activity 2 20 minutes

Watch the film clips about two people in the USA who were sentenced to death and later proved innocent. Ensure students have their UDHR summary to hand.

**Clip 1** Sabrina Butler was exonerated from death row in the US. She spent two years and nine months on Mississippi's death row after being convicted of her baby son's murder. She was released in 1995 when it was discovered that her son had died of natural causes and the bruises on his body were from her attempts at CPR to save him. She now fights against the death penalty.

**Clip 2** John Thompson from New Orleans spent 18 years in prison, 14 on death row; he survived eight execution dates. He was one month away from being executed when private investigators uncovered evidence hidden by prosecutors proving John could not have committed the crime. In his retrial, the jury took just 35 minutes to find him not guilty and he was released. He spent the last 14 years of his life helping others who had been wrongly accused and imprisoned.

After watching the clips, ask students the questions below. Remind students that they have a right to freedom of opinion and expression and that they can exercise this right in terms of whether they think the death penalty is right or wrong. Ask them to justify their answers using their own arguments and those from the film clips.

#### Questions for students to answer after watching the film clips

- How do you feel after watching these films?
- Which human rights are involved in these cases? See your UDHR summary.
- Did families and organisations campaign on their behalf?
- How could the story have been different?
- How do you think John and Sabrina's families felt when they were in prison? And when they were released?
- What about the families of the victims?

### Plenary 10 minutes

Ask students to vote again on whether they are for, against or undecided when it comes to use of the death penalty. Are the results different and have their views changed? Why?

#### In their opinion:

- Is the death penalty a violation of human rights? Why or why not?
- Does a person's guilt or innocence affect their view of the death penalty?
- Does a government have the right to put people to death?
- What action should be taken, if any, for prisoners on death row?
- What more do they want to know about this issue?

### Extension

- What have people done to help fight the death penalty? Research the case of Matsumoto Kenji on death row in Japan that Amnesty International campaigned on. What happened and what was the outcome?

[www.amnesty.org.uk/jua/matsumoto-kenji](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/jua/matsumoto-kenji)

- What does it mean to respect a person's human rights even when they have violated someone else's? Discuss.
- Sign up to news and updates from Amnesty UK's Anti Death Penalty Project [amnesty.org.uk/death-penalty-project-campaign](http://amnesty.org.uk/death-penalty-project-campaign)



Matsumoto Kenji © Private

# LESSON 2 FOR AND AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY STATEMENTS

## Arguments people use **AGAINST**



Sister Helen Prejean © AI

• ‘All of us are worth more than our worst act’ (quote from death penalty activist Sister Helen Prejean, pictured left). Everyone has the right to life, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- Courts can make mistakes. Innocent people are executed, and you cannot bring them back to life.
- Retribution is morally flawed. ‘Revenge is not the answer. The answer lies in reducing violence, not causing more death’ (quote from Marie Deans, whose mother-in-law was murdered in 1972).
- The death penalty does not seem to deter people from committing serious crimes.
- Why do we kill people who kill people to show that killing is wrong? If we support the death penalty for murder, we end up supporting murder, making us just as guilty.
- If someone is put to death, they have no chance to change their life or to contribute positively to society.

## Arguments people use **FOR**



Florida lethal injection gurney  
© Florida Department of Corrections

• Capital punishment is the right punishment for those who take away life: murderers, terrorists, drug peddlers. Those who have taken a life should be killed: a life for a life.

- Capital punishment is a deterrent. The fear of being executed must surely put off the criminals from committing murder. Certainly no executed person will ever kill again.
- It is more humane to put someone to death than to keep them locked up for years.
- The death penalty provides closure for victims’ families.
- If someone murders someone else, they have given up their human rights, including the right to stay alive themselves.

# LESSON 3 SENTENCED TO DEATH

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Students discuss and evaluate five death row case studies to show how the death penalty affects real lives. They include the case of Troy Davis, who was executed by lethal injection in September 2011, and Noura Hussein, a teenager sentenced to death in 2018 for killing her husband.

**Timings** 60 minutes

- Aims**
- To read and discuss individual cases on death row
  - To evaluate arguments for and against the death penalty
  - To question whether the death penalty is a violation of human rights

**You'll need** Case study notes (one per group)  
Summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (one per group). See page 52.

**Teaching note** Please read the case studies and give appropriate content warnings before using them.

**Activity 1** 15 minutes Remind the students of what the death penalty is, and the Amnesty International definition. Also, explain the term death row. Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a case study with a summary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Explain that these are real cases.

Ask each group to read their case study and highlight the most important sections. They must use their UDHR summary to work out which articles or human rights are being restricted or removed from the person.

**They may also want to make notes on:**

- Why might this have happened? • What issues does the case highlight?
- What is the proper punishment for the crime?
- What would have prevented the crime?
- How does this story make them feel?
- What questions would they ask the person in their case study? Their families? The judge who convicted them?

When the groups have finished answering their questions, ask them to present a summary of the case and share notes and ideas within their group. Take a selection of feedback to the whole class.

**Activity 2** 20 minutes Ask students, in small groups, to create a two-minute radio programme that highlights the key details around the death penalty. If there is time in the curriculum, these could also be recorded and peer assessed in the next lesson. Each radio report should include:

- 1 A definition of the death penalty.
- 2 Some case studies from the lesson with an explanation of how these link to the death penalty.
- 3 A decision on whether the death penalty should be used with reasons why or why not.
- 4 Information on how the death penalty affects other members of the family or the victim's family (for example, using Billy Moore's case).

**Plenary 10 minutes** Ask students to write a persuasive 140-character tweet to publicise their radio show or ask them to perform their radio show and peer assess them with two stars and a wish.

Create a piece of artwork or graphic design, write a song or poem, or take a photo to sum up what they have learned about the death penalty.

**Extension** How did religion influence the case of Billy Moore? What beliefs prompted the victim's family to forgive him and Mother Teresa to stand up for him?



## CASE STUDY 1

### Noura Hussein, Sudan

**In 2018, the Sudanese teenager faced the death penalty for killing her abusive husband.**

Noura was 16 years old when she was forced into marriage to an older man chosen by her father. Noura fled the marriage and took refuge at an aunt's house; she wanted to finish her education and train as a teacher. But after three years she was tricked into returning to her husband by family members.

In May 2017, Noura's husband raped her with the assistance of his two brothers and a male cousin who held her down. The next day he tried to rape her again but she defended herself with a knife. Her husband died of his injuries.

#### In her own words

'When I get out of here, I want to study law to defend other oppressed people.'

Noura turned to her family and they went to the police station and disowned her. She was charged with murder and, in May 2018, sentenced to death by hanging.

The lawyers for Noura, now 19, appealed, and a global petition calling for her to be spared reached 1 million signatures. High-profile figures joined the campaign to get her sentence overturned, including Julia Gillard, the former Australian prime minister.

In June 2018, the Sudanese court of appeal commuted the death penalty against Noura Hussein to five years' imprisonment and financial compensation known as *diya* or 'blood money', of 337,500 Sudanese pounds (around £6,100).

In prison, Noura has enrolled on a distance-learning course so she can pursue her dream of becoming a lawyer.

Her case highlights the failure of Sudanese law and the court system to protect women and girls from forced marriages, early marriage and marital rape.



## CASE STUDY 2

### Billy Moore, USA

**Billy killed 77-year-old Fredger Stapleton and spent 16 years on death row in Georgia, USA, before the Stapleton family intervened for his release.**

In 1974, Billy Moore was a 22-year-old trainee electrical engineer in the army and found himself needing money to care for his three-year-old son. Having exhausted legitimate sources of funds, including his army employers and the Red Cross, Billy, whose own father had spent 13 years in jail, was tempted by an 'easy' robbery.

He met a man who told him he knew someone who had \$30,000 they could take, and no one would get hurt. A first attempted robbery failed, and the pair left. Later Billy went back. Fredger Stapleton, 77, came out of a room and fired at him. Billy fired back and killed him. He was arrested the next day, confessed to the crime, pleaded guilty and was given the death sentence.

Later, Billy received the court records which included the names and addresses of a number of Fredger Stapleton's family. He wrote to them to apologise. They wrote back and said they were Christian people and forgave him. The family continued to write to Billy over the years and even talked to him on the phone.

When Billy finally lost all of his appeals the Stapleton family came to plead for his life. The parole board also spoke to Mother Teresa, a Roman Catholic nun and humanitarian dedicated to helping the poor, who had expressed an interest in his case. She asked for his death sentence to be commuted.

On 22 August 1990, after 15 stays of execution and once coming within seven hours of being electrocuted, Billy had his sentence commuted to life. In 1992, he was paroled and left prison.

Billy became the only prisoner who had entered a guilty plea to murder to be released from death row. He is now an ordained minister who travels the world speaking out about the power of forgiveness and campaigning for an end to the death penalty and the mental torture of death row. He is still in contact with the Stapleton family.

## Definitions

### Stay of execution

A delay in carrying out the court-ordered execution.

### Death row

A prison block or section for those sentenced to death.

**In his own words**

'I had four execution dates. I was lucky. I survived Pakistan's death row. What about the thousands who may not?'

## CASE STUDY 3

### Mirza Tahir Hussain, Pakistan

**A teenager from Leeds spent 18 years on death row in Pakistan.**

In December 1988, Mirza, 18, a dual British and Pakistani citizen from Leeds, flew to Pakistan to visit relatives. He was picked up by a taxi driver who reportedly pulled out a gun and tried to assault him. The gun went off during their struggle, killing the driver. Mirza drove the cab and the body to a police station, where he was arrested for murder, despite arguing self-defence.

Mirza was convicted of murder and sentenced to death in Islamabad in September 1989, and then acquitted by a higher court in 1996. However, an Islamic court overturned the acquittal and convicted him of armed robbery, sentencing him to death in 1998, and rejected further appeals.

During this time, the family enlisted the support of MPs, MEPs and pressure groups including Fair Trials and Amnesty International to appeal for a presidential pardon. Mirza's brother Amjad Hussain campaigned non-stop for his release. Demonstrations took place in different countries. Prince Charles and the prime minister (Tony Blair) raised the case with President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan.

In May 2006, President Musharraf issued the first of three stays of execution. On 16 November 2006, he used his powers to commute Mirza's death sentence to life. Under Pakistani sentencing rules, a life sentence is equivalent to 14 years – meaning Mirza had served his time. He was released and returned home to the UK. By then, he was 36.

**Definitions****Stay of execution**

A delay in carrying out the court-ordered execution.

**Death row**

A prison block or section for those sentenced to death.



A demonstration to stop the execution of Mirza Tahir Hussain, led by his brother Amjad (centre), UK



© Private

## CASE STUDY 4

### Troy Davis, USA

**Troy was held on death row in Georgia from the age of 19 for a murder he insisted he did not commit. He was executed in 2011.**

In the early hours of 19 August 1989, a fight broke out in a car park in Savannah, Georgia: a homeless man, Larry Young, was beaten. Off-duty police officer Mark MacPhail ran to the scene to help but was shot dead.

In 1991, Troy Davis was sentenced to death for this murder. There was no physical evidence linking Troy to the crime and seven out of the nine witnesses, on whose evidence he was convicted, went on to recant or change their testimony. Of the remaining two witnesses, one was the principal alternative suspect. At the trial, Troy admitted being at the scene but always declared his innocence.

During his 19 years on death row, Troy faced three execution dates. In June 2010, he was given an opportunity to present new evidence that could prove his innocence. However, despite ongoing doubts about his guilt, the judge ruled against him, putting him back on track for execution. On 21 September 2011, he was executed by lethal injection.

Troy's sister Martina Davis-Correia fought intensively to free her brother. Amnesty International joined the campaign in 2007 issuing a report on his case detailing a pattern of police coercion of witnesses ahead of his trial. Vigils and events were held around the world calling for clemency. Many supporters petitioned the authorities in the state of Georgia not to execute Troy, given the uncertainty about his conviction.



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© Miikka Pirinen/Amnesty Finland

**In his own words**

'I really want to change so many things in the future and I think with the help of my studies I can do it. I'm looking forward to seeing a future where every man, every woman will have full rights.'

## CASE STUDY 5

### Moses Akatugba, Nigeria

**Schoolboy Moses was 16 when he was arrested for stealing mobile phones.**

In 2005, 16-year-old Moses was waiting anxiously for the results of his secondary school exams when his life changed. He was arrested by the Nigerian Army, shot in the hand and interrogated. He was transferred to a police station where he was tortured again. The police suspected Moses of stealing three mobile phones, some money and vouchers in an armed robbery. He has always denied these charges. But the officers forced him to sign two pre-written confessions, which were later used as evidence during his trial.

Moses spent eight years in prison without a trial before he was sentenced to death by hanging. The police officer who investigated his case did not turn up in court. The use of the death penalty for crimes committed by people under 18 is prohibited under international law. Also, any 'confession' obtained through torture should not be allowed as evidence in court.

On 28 May 2015, Moses was pardoned after nearly 10 years in jail. Many pressure groups joined the campaign fighting for his freedom including Amnesty International, and youth activists would demonstrate at the Nigerian embassies. In the last few months before his release, people urged the state governor to show mercy. Over 800,000 messages were sent from activists across the world. Moses has returned home and begun his life again.



Youth activists campaign for Moses Akatugba's freedom © AI

# LESSON 4 CHILDREN AND THE DEATH PENALTY

There are many young offenders on death row and some countries keep sentencing children to death even though it is illegal to execute anyone for a crime they committed when they were under 18. With powerful film clips and real-life stories, students examine their own opinions: should the death penalty be applied to children?

**Timings** 60 minutes

**Aims**

- To learn about children's rights
- To watch films that speak powerfully about children on death row
- To consider if the death penalty for children is just and explain their views

**You'll need** Death penalty juvenile offenders map  
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child summary version at [unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights](http://unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights) (one per student)

**Film clips:** Yemen juvenile offenders face execution (YouTube, search title) 3.04 minutes  
Behnoud's story ([vimeo.com/49304204](https://vimeo.com/49304204)) 5.40 minutes

**Teaching note** This activity can be linked to the assembly *A Life For a Life* in this resource, which looks at juvenile offenders on death row, specifically the case of Mariam as she waits to be executed. See the contents list.

The films have emotive content so are best reviewed before the activity. A content warning needs to be given before you show them to students.

**Starter 10 minutes** Mind map what rights the class think children should have, writing a list on the board. Distribute the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) summary and compare.

Look at Article 37 of the UNCRC which says no person should be sentenced to death or life imprisonment without possibility of release. Explain that it is illegal for minors to be executed under international law for a crime they committed under 18 but some countries disregard this. Which countries? Why? Show the map – it highlights the countries who have executed juveniles since 2000.

**Activity 1 20 minutes** Watch the film clips.



Behnoud Shojaee  
© [www.stopchildexecutions.com](http://www.stopchildexecutions.com)

**Yemen juvenile offenders face execution.** This explores the experiences of children on death row in Yemen who could face a firing squad at any moment. The film was made by Human Rights Watch.

**Behnoud's story.** An animation by Amnesty tells the true story of an Iranian lawyer's fight to save Behnoud Shojaee, a young man on death row. **Content warning:** It is emotive and Behnoud was executed aged 21 in 2009 after the family of his victim refused to pardon him.

Give students time to feed back on their responses. How do they feel? How do they think Behnoud felt having his execution set and postponed three times? How would they feel if they were Behnoud's lawyer, sister, parents of the victim? Why do they think the victim's parents chose to have him executed? What could have been done to change the outcome?

Remind students that international law, to which Yemen and Iran are both signatories, prohibits without exception the execution of individuals for crimes committed when they were under 18. Why do Yemen and Iran ignore this? Should governments stop this and hold countries accountable? How? Is the sentence of life imprisonment without parole a more just option than the death penalty? Why?

### **Activity 2 20 minutes**

From the film clips and children's rights discussed, ask students to write down statements, words and feelings that stick in their mind. Using this material, ask them to create a poem or poster showing their thoughts about children and the death penalty.

Alternatively, students can write a one-page essay titled: Should the death penalty be applied to children?

This work could be presented to the class later.

#### **Questions to think about**

Should you make allowances for age? Should children be treated differently from adults even if they have committed the same crime? What are the alternatives? Are children more likely to be rehabilitated? Should the age limit be lowered? Executing individuals for crimes they committed under the age of 18 violates international law. What should be done to hold governments to the law? How could you take action on this issue?

### **Plenary 10 minutes**

Ask students to pick out the most powerful sentence from their work. Select four or five students from the class and give them whiteboard markers. Tell the class that all of their sentences need to be written onto the board in three minutes. Scribes must write fast. Once written up, count up how many are for or against the death penalty for children, and discuss as a class. How can the sentences be improved? Why?

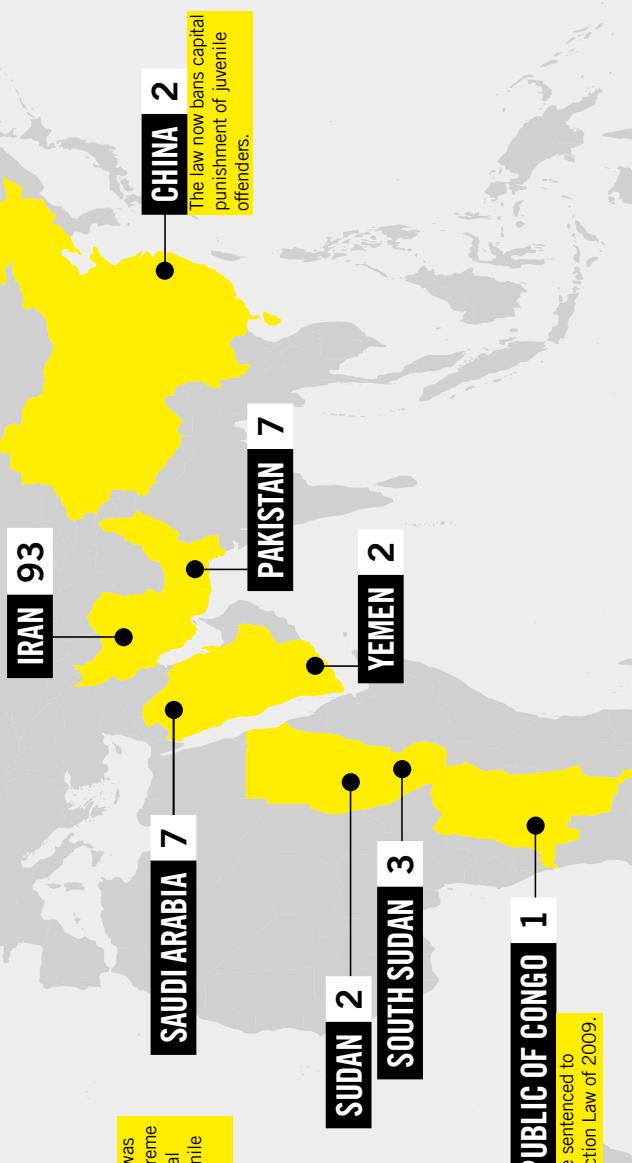
### **Extension**

Research South Sudan's use of the death penalty on children: [www.amnesty.org.uk/south-sudan-dp-children](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/south-sudan-dp-children)

Imagine you have one minute to persuade the authorities to stop this practice. What would you say? Why?



# DEATH PENALTY JUVENILE OFFENDERS



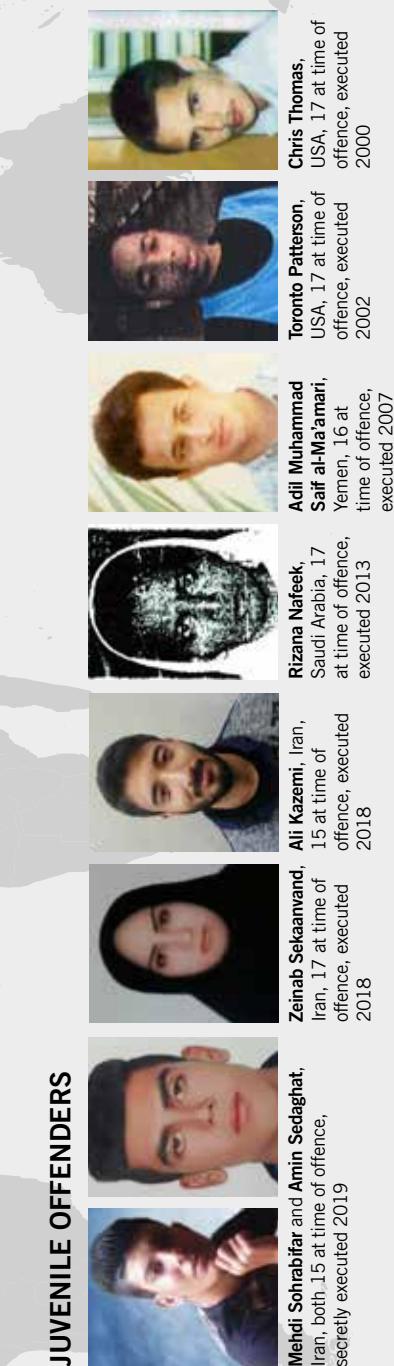
The use of the death penalty for crimes committed by people younger than 18 is prohibited under international human rights law, yet some countries still execute child offenders.

Since 2000, 126 known cases of juvenile executions have taken place in nine countries. Three of these countries have changed their laws to exclude the practice. Iran has executed more than twice as many child offenders as the other nine countries combined. In 2018, eight child offenders were executed – seven in Iran and one in South Sudan.

## KEY

Countries where juvenile offenders have been executed since 2000

1 Number of executions



# LESSON 5 RACE AND THE DEATH PENALTY

Racial bias has always been an issue in death penalty debates. Amnesty has long argued that the death penalty disproportionately affects certain groups of people, particularly black men in the US and migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. Students look at the definition and examples of discrimination. They investigate how discrimination can take place in the death penalty process.

**Timings** 60 minutes

- Aims**
- To understand key terms surrounding discrimination and inequality
  - To analyse evidence about the death penalty and race
  - To write about how and when discrimination can take place

**You'll need** Keywords and definition match up (cut out)  
Universal Declaration of Human Rights summary (for teacher) – see pages 52-53.  
The Legal Process worksheet (one per pair of students)

**Film clips:** My Last Day – Anthony Graves (YouTube) 2.12 mins  
Interview with Anthony Graves (YouTube) 1.57 mins  
Anthony Graves case study sheet (hand out or read out)

Explore the case of Anthony Graves, released from death row



**Teacher note:** Ensure that you set ground rules with your class. Explain that this is an open, safe and non-judgemental space and students need to be mindful of their remarks and ensure they use terms appropriately when discussing racism.

Remind pupils that when you explore racism, people will have lived experience of it and that you are available to discuss anything linked to this lesson in more detail outside the lesson.

**Starter 15 minutes**

Introduce students to the concept of discrimination. Assign a keyword or definition to each student. The students must match the correct definition with the keyword. See keywords and definition match-up sheet.

Once everyone has found their match, ask them to share their definitions. Can they come up with any examples of discrimination that they have seen personally, on the news, in a story, song or social media comment? Why is this discrimination? How does it make them feel?

You could treat a group of students unfairly to illustrate the point. Offer half the class at random something they want, eg a sticker, merit. Ask the half who didn't receive anything how it feels to be treated this way? Is it fair? Is discrimination a problem in our society? Why?

Explain to the students that discrimination is banned under international law and international standards such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Everyone should have the same human rights without discrimination. Refer to Article 2: 'Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind'. You should not be deprived of any of your rights, because of your race, colour, sex, language, religion or political opinions. It should not matter what country you were born in, what social class you belong to, or how rich or poor you are.

## Main Activity 1 20 minutes (can take longer)

Ask the class to guess how many white people compared to black people are on death row in the USA. After listening to their answers, reveal the following statistic:

White 42%
African American 42%
Hispanic 13%
Other 3%

(Source: [deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://deathpenaltyinfo.org), May 2019).

How does this compare with the population as a whole? Answer:  

White 60%
Hispanic 18%
African American 13%
Other 10%

(Source: [census.gov](http://census.gov), 2018)

The conclusion here is that African Americans are overrepresented on death row, suggesting that often, receiving a death sentence depends on the ethnic background of the defendant and the victim.

Since 1977, when capital punishment re-started after a 10-year gap, nearly 80 per cent of death row defendants who have been executed were sentenced to death for killing white victims, even though about half of all murder victims in the US are African American.

Numerous studies have reached these basic conclusions:  
 1 When the victim is white, the death penalty is imposed more often than when the victim is black.  
 2 The likelihood of a death sentence is several times higher in cases in which blacks killed whites than for cases where whites killed blacks.

*'From initial charging decisions to plea bargaining to jury sentencing, African Americans are treated more harshly when they are defendants, and their lives are accorded less value when they are victims.'*

**Amnesty International USA**

On 11 October 2018, Washington became the 20th state to abolish the death penalty when its Supreme Court unanimously ruled that capital punishment violates the state constitution because it 'is imposed in an arbitrary and racially biased manner.'

Ask the class why they think racial discrimination happens in death penalty cases? Can they name three racial factors that may influence how the death penalty is dispensed? Develop this answer by moving on to the main activity.

**Main Activity 2** 20 minutes

To understand where and how discrimination occurs in the death penalty process, ask the students to work in pairs using the Legal Process worksheet. The worksheet shows the key people at each step of the process from arrest and charging decision to the trial.

Using this worksheet, students should consider how discrimination against racial groups might occur along these different steps and what the sources of discrimination might be.

After they have finished take feedback from the class and identify where discrimination can occur in this process. This may look something like:

**1 Charging decision:** In states with the death penalty, local district attorneys generally decide whether to seek the death penalty.

**2 Trial**

**a) Jurors:** Jurors are regular people who may be subject to misconceptions and prejudices that affect their ability to offer unbiased, just verdicts. Studies have shown that in many cases involving black defendants, prosecutors have created all-white juries to increase the likelihood of conviction and death sentence.

**b) Defence lawyers:** Almost all the people who have committed crimes that can be punishable by death are impoverished and are forced to rely on court-appointed lawyers as their defence. Court-appointed lawyers have large caseloads so the quality of legal representation is substantially lower (indirect discrimination). They may be openly bigoted or lack cultural sensitivity towards minority groups. All of this affects the attorney's ability to properly defend their clients.

**(c) Judges:** Despite the assumption that judges should proceed over matters in an impartial way, trial judges in the USA are mostly elected officials who may not be neutral in their administration, despite their position.

**Added Activity** 20 minutes

Amnesty research shows that the Saudi Arabian authorities discriminate on national and ethnic grounds when carrying out executions, and the death penalty is used against those who are least able to access their rights.

A high proportion of those executed in Saudi Arabia are foreign nationals, mostly migrant workers from poor and developing countries in Africa and Asia. All too often they receive no legal assistance, are unable to speak the language of the authorities or follow court proceedings, which are conducted in Arabic, and have been coerced into false 'confessions' obtained under torture. Often they do not understand their rights or the reasons for their arrest and the charges against them. They are also unlikely to receive a pardon, an option available to those who are able to influence the victim's relatives through power, money and family and royal ties. A Saudi national is up to eight times more likely to escape execution through a *diyya* or 'blood money' payment than a foreigner. Foreign nationals make up about a quarter of the country's population.

Discuss the disadvantages that foreign nationals face in the death penalty process. Where does the discrimination take place? What needs to be done?

**Main Activity 3** 20 minutes

Watch the clip My Last Day – Anthony Graves, about a man imprisoned for 18 years, 12 of those on death row, before being cleared. Give a content warning before you show the clip as it discusses sensitive material around racism, death and the death penalty. Discuss with students:

- 1) What was it like on death row?
- 2) Why may prisoners struggle with their mental health?
- 3) How would it feel to watch people walk down the hallway to the electric chair? Why is this considered to be torture?
- 4) How did you feel after watching it?

Now watch the clip Interview with Anthony Graves, and share the case study sheet, which reveals more detail about his experience on death row and the racism surrounding his case. If appropriate, older students can look into his case further. An article in *Texas Monthly* lists the injustices attached to this case: [anthonygravesfoundation.org/news/2017/innocence-lost](http://anthonygravesfoundation.org/news/2017/innocence-lost)

First, discuss:

- Why does Anthony Graves think the death penalty is wrong?
- What does he think is an alternative to the death penalty?

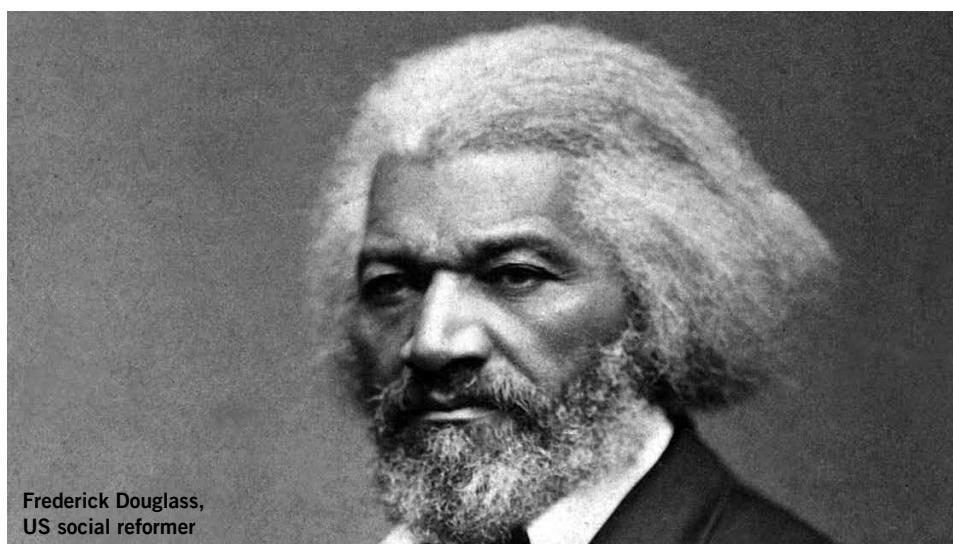
Second:

- At which points do you think discrimination took place? Use The Legal Process worksheet to help you identify at what stage (charging decision, trial) and by who.
- What does this tell you about institutional racism in the USA?
- Do you think the same institutional racism exists in police cases and trials in the UK? Why?
- What more should be done to ensure that all people have a fair trial?

This activity can also be done in groups of four using the Anthony Graves case study in this lesson with the discussion questions.

## Plenary 10 minutes

If you were a law maker and could bring in any changes to make the death penalty system more just and equal, what would they be?



## Extension

Frederick Douglass (above) was one of the most prominent abolitionists of the 19th century. Research his speech delivered in New York on 7 October 1858 where he called the death penalty 'a mockery of justice'. What did he mean? Print out his picture and next to it write down how you think he would feel about capital punishment today.

### Sources:

Lesson from The Death Penalty Resource Guide, Amnesty International USA  
Affront to Justice: Death Penalty in Saudi Arabia report, Amnesty International

# LESSON 5 KEYWORDS AND DEFINITION MATCH UP

Cut out the keywords and definitions and ask students to match them up

Discrimination	The unjust treatment of different groups of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, gender or sexual orientation
Prejudice	Preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience but can be based on stereotypes and conscious or unconscious bias
Equality	The state of being treated fairly with regard to status, rights and opportunities
Inequality	The state of not being treated fairly, especially in status, rights and opportunities
Bias	Prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair
Justice	The quality of being fair, equal, reasonable and balanced
Racism	Prejudice or discrimination directed against someone of a different race based on the idea that your own race is superior. It involves an imbalance of power dynamics and can be systemic
Privilege	An unearned, special right or advantage given to a person or group
Xenophobia	Hatred, dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries

# LESSON 5 KEYWORDS AND DEFINITION MATCH UP

Cut out the keywords and definitions and ask students to match them up

Islamophobia	Hatred, dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims
Ageism	Prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age
Sexism	Prejudice or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex
Institutional racism	Racial discrimination that has become established as normal behaviour within a society, political institution or organisation
Indirect discrimination	A practice or policy rule which applies to everyone in the same way but disadvantages a group of people who share a characteristic, especially race, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation
Direct discrimination	Someone is treated differently or worse than someone else especially on the grounds of race, age, gender or sexual orientation
Antisemitism	Discrimination, prejudice or hostility against Jews
Homophobia	The fear or dislike of someone based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about lesbian, gay or bi people
Transphobia	The fear or dislike of someone based on the fact they are trans, including the denial of, or refusal to accept, their gender identity

# LESSON 5 THE LEGAL PROCESS WORKSHEET

Where discrimination can occur in the death penalty process

Legal process	People involved	Potential acts of discrimination
Arrest	Police Media	
Charging	Police Lawyers	
First courtroom appearance (being charged, entering a plea)	Lawyers Judge Media	
Trial	Lawyers Judge Jury Media	



## CASE STUDY

### Anthony Graves

#### The 138th exonerated death row inmate in America.

In 1992, Anthony Graves was arrested, charged with and convicted of assisting Robert Carter in the murders of a family of six in Somerville, Texas. There was no motive or physical evidence connecting Anthony with the crime scene. His conviction relied primarily upon the testimony of Robert, who later recanted, and again minutes before his execution in 2000, stated that Anthony didn't do it.

Anthony, 26, who had no record of violence, was imprisoned for 18 years, 16 of those in solitary confinement and 12 of those on death row. He faced two execution dates.

In 2006, the US Court of Appeals overturned Anthony's conviction and ordered a new trial after finding that prosecutors elicited false statements and withheld testimony that could have influenced the jurors. However, Anthony had to wait four years for a retrial and was not released until 2010.

In 2011, he was awarded \$1.4 million for the time he spent on death row. Prosecutor Charles Sebesta was disbarred in 2015 for concealing exculpatory evidence (evidence that could have helped Anthony) and using false testimony in the case to secure a conviction.

Since then, Anthony has become a full-time advocate for criminal justice reform, testifying before the US Senate about the harms of solitary confinement, serving on the board of directors for the Houston Forensic Science Centre, and working with the American Civil Liberties Union's Campaign for Smart Justice. He speaks widely on the death penalty and runs the Anthony Graves Foundation, which works to draw attention to problems within the US criminal justice system including freeing the wrongfully convicted.

#### In his own words

'I never thought that a young, African American man from the projects could file a grievance against a powerful, white DA [district attorney] in Texas and win.'

#### Sources:

Anthony Graves Foundation  
Death Penalty Information Centre  
Amnesty International  
Texas Monthly (In his own words quote)

# LESSON 6 THE DEATH PENALTY DEBATE

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Should the death penalty be kept, restricted or abolished in the USA?  
Students present their arguments from a particular viewpoint and persuade others to support their position.

**Timings** 1 hour preparation (optional), 1 hour debate

**Aims**

- To learn about the death penalty in the USA
- To listen to and represent the voices of different groups
- To critically evaluate different viewpoints on the death penalty

**You'll need** USA fact sheet (for teacher)  
Role cards (cut up and distributed, one per group)

**Another topic of debate in this country**  
Should the death penalty be reinstated in the UK?

**Starter 10 minutes** Introduce the learning objectives to the class. Read out the USA fact sheet and discuss any of the views that arise. Are students surprised by any of the information? Why is the situation so complex?

Explain any unknown key words for them (refer to glossary if appropriate).

**Activity 1 10 minutes** Divide the class into groups. Tell them they will pose as different groups of people on a committee sitting down to debate whether the death penalty should be abolished in Georgia.

The people on the committee are the police; the Civil Liberties Commission; the Council of Faiths; a political party; the Victims of Crime Society; and Amnesty International.

Assign each group a role card. Give them 10 minutes to plan their arguments 'in role' for the debate even if this is a position they do not personally share. This should include: who they are and three supported arguments for or against the death penalty.

**Teaching note** It is possible for students in the police, the Council of Faiths and the Victims of Crime Society groups to argue for or against the death penalty. A useful exercise would be to allow student groups to work out which position they would like to take internally. Alternatively ask them to take a certain position to ensure you have a fair debate. If students need additional support, make the role groups larger.

**Activity 2 30 minutes** Explain that the debate will now move to: should the death penalty be abolished in the USA? Again, they must argue their position 'in role'. They will need at least three strong arguments and must reach a reasoned conclusion at the end. Each group should elect a spokesperson to explain their decision to the rest of the class.

Call the spokespeople one by one to give their speech, which should be about one minute long. Ask people to raise their role card if they would like to ask questions. Once the speakers are finished, call for a vote by a show of hands for a final decision on whether the USA should abolish the death penalty.

**Plenary 20 minutes** Ask students to come out of their role and discuss the following key questions in small groups or as a class, or set them as questions for homework:

- How did you find your role? What did you learn? Has it changed your perception of



Death row, Alabama, USA  
© Doug Magee



© AI

the death penalty? If so, why? If not, why not?

- Which arguments did you find the most and least convincing? Do you agree with the class decision? Why or why not?
- What factors influence the position that the USA takes on an issue like the death penalty?
- Religious positions on moral issues often vary not only between religions but also within religions. Can you identify any examples of this in the debate?
- Do you think it is right that countries can choose for themselves whether or not to use the death penalty? What could the role of other countries be in issues such as the death penalty?

- What will be the consequence of the decision to keep or abolish the death penalty? Who will it affect in the USA? Think about the families of both parties, society, other individuals etc.

The following points may help you to explore these questions with students:

- Factors that influence a country's position on the death penalty include: religious considerations such as the teachings of the official religion of the country; political considerations such as popularity with voters, public anxiety over crime rates, influence and relationships with other countries; economic considerations such as the cost of keeping people in prison versus the cost of executing them.
- Religious traditions often include teachings both on justice through retribution and on compassion or forgiveness, for example in Christianity 'an eye for an eye' (Old Testament) contrasts with 'turn the other cheek' (New Testament). Islam on the whole accepts capital punishment but forgiveness, together with peace, is a predominant Qur'anic theme. Buddhists place great emphasis on non-violence and compassion for all life but several countries with substantial Buddhist populations retain the death penalty.

## Activity

Ask students to research religious teachings on the death penalty.

- Countries can decide what they do within their own boundaries as long as they do not abuse human rights. Please note that the death penalty is still permitted under international law.
- Human rights laws are constantly evolving to ensure that they are relevant to our changing society. Organisations such as the UN try to build a global consensus on issues such as the abolition of the death penalty. Human rights law itself could be changed to reflect this evolution. For example, in 2002 a new protocol was added to the European Convention on Human Rights, created by the Council of Europe in 1950. Protocol No 13 abolished the death penalty in all circumstances.

## Extension

- How have your initial views on the death penalty changed over the course of this lesson (or activities)?
- For those interested in getting involved in death penalty activism, how would you campaign? See [amnesty.org.uk/issues/death-penalty](http://amnesty.org.uk/issues/death-penalty) and link to Lesson 7.

# LESSON 6 ROLE CARDS

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Please cut up and distribute to groups for the debate.

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## THE POLICE

You represent the police force in Georgia. A survey of police revealed the following conflicting opinions.

Some police are against the death penalty as it does not allow criminals the chance to reform or change their ways. They also believe killing murderers makes them as bad as the person who committed the murder. Given the expense of the death penalty, and appealing against it, some feel that these resources could be better spent elsewhere.

Others, however, support the death penalty for certain crimes as they believe it acts as a deterrent. Abolishing it, they say, would lead to an increase in violent crimes. What's more, a victim's family deserves to know that a person has paid the ultimate price to provide justice and closure.

Work out which position you will take.

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## THE CIVIL LIBERTIES COMMISSION

You represent a human rights and civil liberties organisation.

It believes that the death penalty violates the constitutional ban against cruel and unusual punishment and that the state should not give itself the right to kill human beings, especially when it kills with premeditation and ceremony.

It also argues that the death penalty is applied in an unfair and unjust manner against people, largely dependent on how much money they have, the skill of the lawyer, and the race of the victim. The commission also considers that the lengthy time that people spend on death row is akin to torture, and as torture is a human rights violation the death penalty should be made illegal.

You will argue against the death penalty.

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## THE COUNCIL OF FAITHS

The Council of Faiths speaks for several major religious faiths in the country including Islamic, Jewish and all the main Christian churches.

The council contains a conservative and a liberal element.

Some of the council's liberal members believe that the death penalty is wrong because various religious leaders spoke out against murder, including Jesus. They might argue that Jesus Christ suffered the injustice of the death penalty by crucifixion and preached forgiveness rather than retribution. They argue that only God should give or take a life and that Holy Scriptures condemn murder as a sin.

However, some of the council's conservative members believe that the death penalty is acceptable as the holy books also highlight points where people were punished with death for killing others. They also argue that the state should strengthen traditional morality based on religious teachings.

Work out which position you will take.

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

You represent an international human rights organisation. Amnesty International maintains that the death penalty violates human rights on every single level, particularly the right to life (Article 3, UDHR) and the right not to be tortured or subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment (Article 5, UDHR).

Its campaign for the worldwide abolition of the death penalty began in 1977 – back then just 16 countries had abolished the death penalty. Amnesty opposes the use of the death penalty in all cases for all crimes, whether someone is innocent or guilty.

The belief is that no one – not even a government – has the right to take away someone else's life. The death penalty does not deter crime, it is irreversible and mistakes happen. You might also argue that it is often used in unfair justice systems and can be used as a political tool.

You must argue against the death penalty and for those currently in prison on death row to have their sentences commuted to life imprisonment.

**A POLITICAL PARTY**

You represent a political party in the USA.

You support the death penalty in certain circumstances such as murder, terrorism, and harm to children.

You believe that the death penalty prevents crime, but also that these crimes simply deserve such a punishment.

You believe that all courts should have the option of imposing the death penalty in these cases. You condemn the Supreme Court's erosion of the right of the people to enact capital punishment in their states. Violent crime needs to be addressed before it is too late and to that end judges should not turn criminals loose or protect them from the death penalty.

You argue that you need to put the rights of victims and families first again.

You must argue for the death penalty in certain cases.

**VICTIMS OF CRIME SOCIETY**

You are members of the Victims of Crime Society, a vocal group standing with victims of violent crime and their families.

You believe that all victims and their families deserve the respect, support and services that they need to rebuild their lives.

Some members argue that the death penalty brings justice and closure to victims' families. Those who have lost loved ones in terrible crimes have a right to see the person responsible held to account in a fair trial with the option of the death penalty.

However, other members argue that the death penalty can actually cause additional harm to these families and oppose it. It cannot genuinely relieve their suffering. It just extends that suffering to the family of the condemned person.

Work out which position you will take.

# LESSON 6 USA FACT SHEET

The history of the death penalty in the USA can be traced back to colonial times in the 1600s. The first recorded execution was in 1608 in Virginia when Captain George Kendall was executed for being a spy for Spain.

## How the death penalty was used in 2018

For the 10th year in a row, the USA remained the only country in the Americas to carry out executions.

The number of executions and death sentences slightly increased for the second year in a row – it is seventh in the list of global executioners – but remained within historically low trends of recent years. The number of executions was 25 in 2018 compared to 23 in 2017 and 20 in 2016, but it was 52 in 2009.



Amnesty rally, USA, 1988  
© Keith Rutter

A total of 20 states have abolished the death penalty, including seven since 2007. Currently, the death penalty is retained in 30 states.

Of these, 11 states – California, Colorado, Kansas, Kentucky, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Wyoming – have not carried out executions for at least 10 years.

The governors of Colorado, Oregon and Pennsylvania have established moratoriums on executions. The federal authorities have not carried out any executions since 2003 and the military authorities since 1961.

2018 recorded executions	2018 recorded death sentences	People known to be under sentence of death at the end of 2018
25 in eight states: Alabama (2) Florida (2) Georgia (2) Nebraska (1) Ohio (1) South Dakota (1) Tennessee (3) Texas (13)	45 in 16 jurisdictions: Alabama (3) Arizona (2) Arkansas (2) California (5) Florida (7) Louisiana (1) Mississippi (2) Missouri (1) Nebraska (2) Nevada (1) Ohio (6) Oklahoma (1) Pennsylvania (2) Tennessee (1) Texas (7) Federal authorities (2)	2,654 people held in 33 jurisdictions including: 739 in California 343 in Florida 223 in Texas 176 in Alabama 144 in Pennsylvania

# LESSON 7 TAKING ACTION

Case studies and films show that we all have the power to stand up for our opinions. Students learn about different groups involved in death penalty activism before being challenged to make a change or improvement in their school or local community.

**Timings** 60 minutes (or run over two lessons or a longer-term project)

**Aims**

- To identify groups who campaign against the death penalty
- To understand how we can all stand up for human rights
- To develop a school or community project
- To feel empowered with the confidence that they can make a difference

**You'll need**

What, why, who, how planning sheet  
Weighing it up grid

**Film clips:** Letters To Death Row ([vimeo.com/67891555](https://vimeo.com/67891555)) 13.46 minutes

Over To You ([vimeo.com/6716313](https://vimeo.com/6716313)) 16.54 minutes

You Are Not Powerless ([vimeo.com/292934966](https://vimeo.com/292934966)) 1 minute

Stress that the films are emotive. You Are Not Powerless contains a beeped-out swear word.

**Starter** 5 minutes

Talk to the class about organisations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and Reprieve who campaign against the death penalty and why.

**Activity 1** 15 minutes

What do the class know about Amnesty International? Research who belongs to this organisation. What is its mission statement regarding the death penalty? Why? How does Amnesty campaign on the issue? Current actions?

See [amnesty.org.uk/issues/death-penalty](http://amnesty.org.uk/issues/death-penalty)  
[amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty](http://amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty)

One of the ways Amnesty campaigns is by sending letters to people on death row. Show the film clip Letters To Death Row.

Explain to students that letters and actions taken for prisoners can ensure they: receive better treatment; are eventually released; have hope; do not feel alone.



'I thank Amnesty International and their activists for the great support that made me a conqueror in this situation. Amnesty and activists are my heroes. I promise to be a human rights activist, to fight for others.'

**Moses Akatugba on his release from death row, Nigeria, 2015**

Amnesty works on key cases that reveal the unfairness of the death penalty, such as that of Moses Akatugba in Nigeria who was aged 16 at the time of the offence (stealing mobile phones). He was repeatedly tortured into signing a confession. He was sentenced to death by hanging but received a full pardon after nearly 10 years in jail following intensive campaigning from Amnesty supporters across the world.

More information: [amnesty.org.uk/nigeria-moses-akatugba](http://amnesty.org.uk/nigeria-moses-akatugba)

Also see Lesson 3 for a detailed case study of Moses.

**Activity 2** 30 minutes

Show Over To You (how three Amnesty youth groups stand up for human rights across the UK) or You Are Not Powerless (encouraging young people to take action). Discuss the impact of taking action and explain how everyone has a voice. Ask students if they believe they could make a difference if they wanted to? Why? Why not?

Tell students they can get involved in a Taking Action project or student-led campaign. Ask them to identify issues or problems they see in their school or local area that they would like to see changed and improved, or pinpoint an area they could offer help in. Start by using the What, why, who, how? worksheet to support their planning. Then move on to the Weighing it up grid.

Mind map a list of projects they wish to act on, eg inviting a local speaker or MP to school; volunteering with a local community group; raising money for a local cause such as the homeless; combating bullying; collecting for a food bank; organising a clean-up in the park or playground; starting a club or team or mentoring younger students; organising a petition or a concert to promote human rights; promoting Black History Month, global feminism or setting up any other student-led campaign.

Choose two projects from the list to discuss. What are the benefits of each project? Choose the one that the class agree will be the most effective.

Discuss all the steps they will need to pull the project together and implement it.

**Plenary** 10 minutes

Talk or write about a human rights defender or someone who has made a difference at school or locally. Maybe they've stood up to bullies, helped the homeless, aided refugees or campaigned for better education or action on climate change.

**Share these examples:** At 14, Fahma Mohamed started campaigning against female genital mutilation and gender-based violence. Chris Whitehead, 12, wore a skirt to school in protest at rules that did not allow boys to wear shorts in hot weather. Luke Wilcox, 18, started a petition to help his friend Brian White stay in the UK when he faced deportation to Zimbabwe. Greta Thunberg, 15, inspired the Fridays for Future school strikes to highlight the climate emergency.

**Think points**

Why is campaigning for things you care about so important?

What things would help these people to stand up against injustice?

What needs to change for each person to achieve their goal?

What support do they need and why is support important?

**Extension**

If students are inspired to write letters for a case on death row, see link to Matsumoto Kenji [www.amnesty.org.uk/jua/matsumoto-kenji](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/jua/matsumoto-kenji). Or they could join or set up an Amnesty youth group at their school or college, see [www.amnesty.org.uk/youth](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/youth)

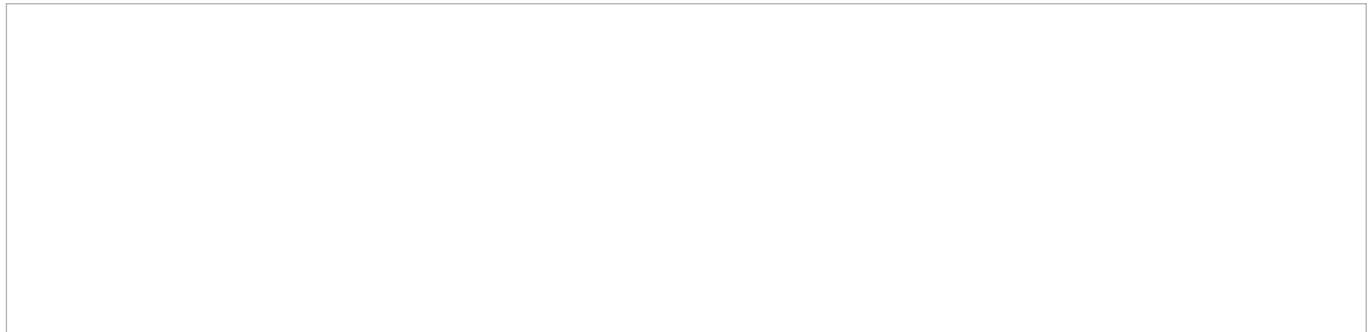
**Action on the death penalty**

- Host a school screening of a death penalty themed film, for instance Let Him Have It (15), Dead Man Walking (15), To Kill A Mockingbird (PG), 12 Angry Men (U), The Life of David Gale (15). Afterwards hold a discussion. How was the death penalty presented? What does the director want you to come away with? And so on.
- Invite an Amnesty speaker to hold an assembly or lesson using these resources. [amnesty.org.uk/speakers](http://amnesty.org.uk/speakers)
- Organise a stall to distribute information about the death penalty – set up a laptop to screen Behnoud's Story ([vimeo.com/49304204](http://vimeo.com/49304204)) or Letters to Death Row ([vimeo.com/67891555](http://vimeo.com/67891555)) to get people talking.

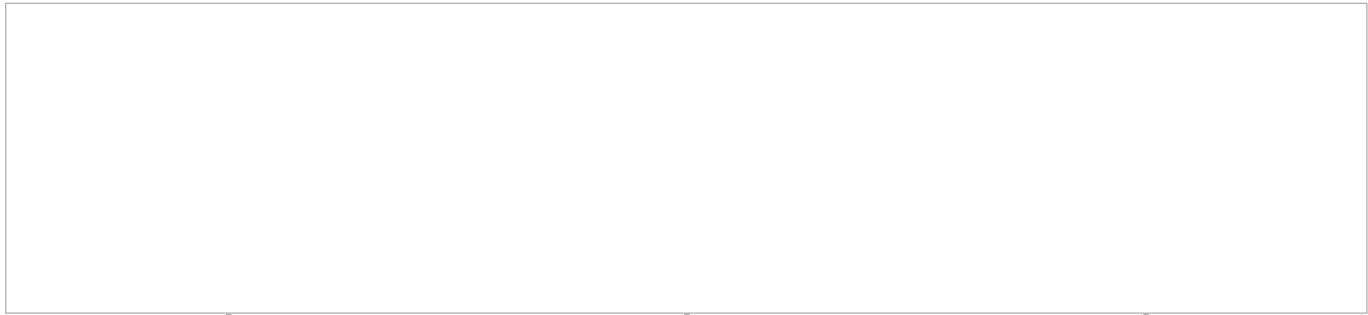
# LESSON 7 WHAT, WHY, WHO, HOW? PLANNING SHEET

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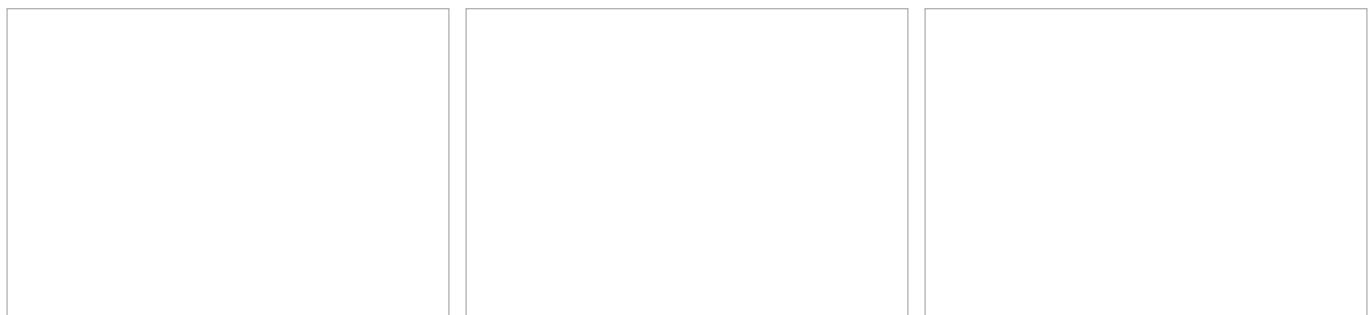
**WHAT** is your issue? What is wrong and what needs to change?  
What human rights are involved? Are any rights being denied?



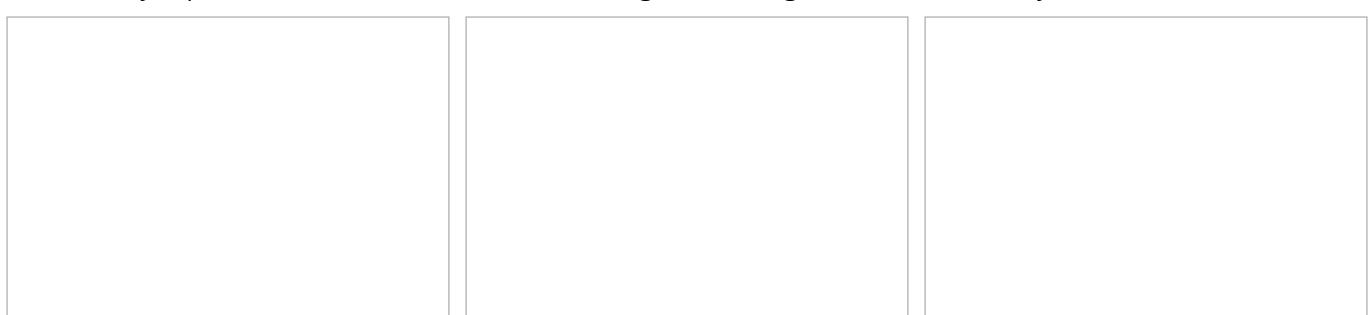
**WHY** does this issue occur?



**WHO** can help sort out this issue?



**HOW** could you persuade them or work with them to bring about change? What action could you take?



# LESSON 7 WEIGHING IT UP GRID

How easy is it to achieve this action? Consider the time, resources, skills and opportunities you have		Difficult	Average	Easy
Big impact				
How much impact will this action have?	Average impact			
Consider the type and number of people you can influence				Little impact

# ASSEMBLY A LIFE FOR A LIFE

## About this assembly



This assembly aims to raise awareness of the issues surrounding alleged juvenile offenders on death row. It highlights the problems and emotions a young girl called Mariam faces as she waits to be executed.

The assembly is in the form of a play. The play and characters are fictional, but they are based on the testimony and experiences of real people, and the current situation in countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The assembly has been written for students aged 14+ to perform as part of a peer-education awareness-raising activity. It could be used to inspire thinking before a drop-down day on human rights or performed to younger students, as appropriate. It is accompanied by a PowerPoint slide show.

The activities in this resource pack can be used as a follow-up to the assembly, particularly Lesson 4 Children and the death penalty.

You may also want to watch the following films about juvenile execution:

**Yemen juvenile offenders face execution** (YouTube, search title) 3.04 minutes

**Beynoud's story** ([vimeo.com/49304204](https://vimeo.com/49304204)) 5.40 minutes

See **Lesson 4** for more information.

## Timings

Assembly 10 minutes. Preparation 30-90 minutes.

## What you need

PowerPoint slide show

Assembly script

Seven 'actors'

## Teacher note

### Juvenile offenders

International law prohibits the execution of juvenile offenders – people aged under 18 at the time of the crime. However, at least eight juvenile offenders were executed in 2018 (seven in Iran, one in South Sudan) and six juvenile offenders were executed in 2017 (four in Iran and two in South Sudan). In addition, since 1990 Amnesty International has documented 145 executions of child offenders in 10 countries: China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, South Sudan, the USA and Yemen. Several of these countries have now changed their laws to exclude the practice. Also, juvenile offenders remain on death row in Bangladesh, Iran, Maldives, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

### Capital punishment in Islam

Although the execution of juveniles happens in countries of different religions, we have included this explanation because the assembly focuses on a Muslim country.

Forgiveness and peace are a predominant theme of the Qur'an, the central religious text of Islam. Ultimately it is believed one's eternal punishment is in God's hands, but there is a place for punishment in this life as well.

According to common interpretations of Islamic law, the following two types of crimes can be punished by death:

- **Intentional murder** In these cases the victim's family is given the power to insist on the death penalty or to pardon the perpetrator and accept 'blood money' (compensation) for their loss.

- **Fasad fil-ardh** ('spreading mischief in the land') This can mean many different things, but the following crimes are usually included: treason/apostasy (when one

leaves the faith and turns against it); terrorism; piracy of any kind; rape; adultery; homosexual behaviour.

Each case is regarded individually and the court has the flexibility to order more lenient punishments. Islamic countries that practise a strict Shari'a law are associated with the use of capital punishment as retribution for the largest variety of crimes.

Shari'a ('way' or 'path') law is derived from the Qur'an, the teachings and example of the prophet Muhammad, and rulings of Islamic scholars.

A number of Muslim countries do not use the death penalty. For example, Turkey has abolished it and Morocco and Algeria are considered abolitionist in practice.

There is a growing abolitionist sector who argue some of the following:

- Forgiveness and peace are core themes of the Qur'an.
- Acts of states executing the accused while denying access to a lawyer are contradictory to the Islamic concept of justice.
- Experts in Islamic law differ on the interpretations of the sacred texts and the context in which they should be applied.

## Glossary

**Blood money:** Compensation paid by an offender (usually a murderer) to the family or kin of the victim. The amount varies from country to country.

**Qisas:** Retaliation; the right of the heirs of a murder victim to demand execution of the murderer.

**Diyya:** Compensation paid to the heirs of a victim. In Arabic, it means both 'blood money' and 'ransom'.



**Case notes** We mention the real-life case of Moses Akatugba in the assembly script. See Case Study 5, Lesson 3 of this pack.

**What to do** Introduce the assembly to the class and ask for volunteers to read out the script. Ask students to decide on roles, or allocate them yourself. Hand out copies of the script. Rehearse together, practising with the PowerPoint images. Ask students not to attempt to use different accents when undertaking their roles – it can distract from the content of the speech and may cause offence.

**Roles required** **Performers (speaking parts):** six actors for the named roles, plus one person as the narrator, or the narration can be split between several students. Character background notes given in the script will help them to prepare for their roles.

**Performers (non-speaking parts):** any number of students can be involved in creating still images or short mimes to illustrate the scenes being described.

**Technicians:** one technician operating the PowerPoint, one technician for lighting and sound if necessary.

**Director:** two students could take the role of director.

**Front of house:** three to six students to usher people to their seats.

**Staging** This play can be performed as a:  

- **role play**, where the actors interact with each other and walk around the stage. Think about having a silent shadow play behind a screen while the killing is being described.
- **reading**, with the actors staying in one place facing the audience while reading from their scripts.

Provide your students with props so that members of the audience can identify which characters they are playing. Sound effects will add to the drama, for example Iranian music, the glass smashing, wind howling, police car siren.

**Extension activities** Perform the assembly a second time and invite the audience to stop the play at different points to trade places with a character. What would they change to make the outcome of the play different? How could it have a more positive ending?

Ask follow-up discussion questions, for example what do they think about

- The way that Mariam and Yousra were treated at the start of the assembly?
- Prisoners being forced to sign confessions?
- Juvenile offenders being executed?
- What the role of campaigning organisations like Amnesty International should be?

# ASSEMBLY SCRIPT A LIFE FOR A LIFE

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## Character background

These notes should help the performers with speaking parts to prepare their roles. Teachers may also want to look more closely at the information supplied by the lessons and film in the pack. It is important to create real characters and not to use accents so as not to detract from the content or cause offence.

<b>Narrator(s)</b>	One person or a few people taking separate lines or speaking together can play this part of a well-informed and enthusiastic Amnesty International youth member. The narrators need to be clear and able to project their voice to ensure the audience can understand the context of the play. They should be able to read from the script. It may help their confidence if they can stand behind a lectern as they read.
<b>Nazim – the prison warden</b>	A dour, rather miserable and vengeful character who believes he is ‘just doing his job’.
<b>Mariam – the prisoner</b>	A pleasant 17-year-old girl who cannot understand what she has done wrong and feels alone and scared.
<b>Rami – the detective</b>	A powerful, aggressive man who is certain of his own position and opinions.
<b>Mariam’s mother</b>	A quiet woman. She does not know what she can do to help her daughter. She feels powerless and at the mercy of the authorities.
<b>Samir – the victim’s son</b>	The son of the dead man, he is angry and exasperated and wants revenge for his father’s murder.
<b>Nabil – the lawyer</b>	A fair, serious man who has more clients than he can cope with. He has a strong sense of justice and wants to do what is right.

**Show slide 1****Narrator**

The play you are about to see comes to us from Amnesty International. It's the story of a 17-year-old girl called Mariam. Although made up, it is based on real events.

Amnesty is a global human rights organisation campaigning to stop the abuse of human rights around the world. One of Amnesty's key campaigns is the worldwide abolition of the death penalty.

**Show slide 2****Nazim**

I am a prison guard here on death row. I look after some of the wickedest people in the world – murderers and the morally corrupt. We keep them locked up. Then we hang them. Last year in my country we got rid of at least 350 prisoners – not enough in my opinion.

**Show slide 3****Nazim**

Hey! Prisoner 2794. Open up. Here's your food – bread and watery soup. Lovely. Eat up. It might be your last meal in this world.

**Show slide 4****Mariam**

My name is Mariam. I sit in this cell. I stare at the stone walls. I try not to look out through the prison bars at the hangman's noose swinging, waiting for me. In my mind is terror and uncertainty.

**Show slide 5****Nazim**

Prisoner 2794. That's her in the cell – always crying. Never speaks. She is young. She looks innocent enough. But, believe me, she is truly evil. She stabbed a man to death – a prominent local citizen with a wife and three children. And any day now she is going to pay for her crime.



[Show slide 6](#)

### Narrator

Prisoner 2794 is a girl called Mariam. Let me tell you what Amnesty knows about her. Two years ago, when she was 15 years old, she went to see her favourite pop group, Arian, playing at the local football stadium. Mariam went to the concert with her young cousin Yousra who was celebrating her 13th birthday.

After the show, the girls walked home through a park. Suddenly they were surrounded by a group of men shouting abuse. One man pulled Yousra to the ground. Another tore off Mariam's veil. The girls started to scream. Mariam ran at Yousra's attacker with all her might.



[Show slide 7](#)

### Mariam

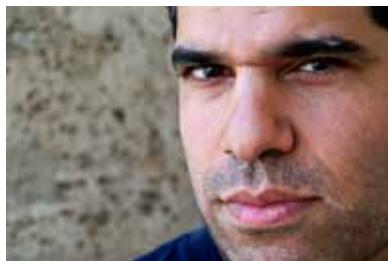
Somehow I managed to knock the big man over. But he stood up and came for me. He was clutching a knife. I felt in my bag for the bottle of Pepsi I had and managed to smash it. I held it by the neck and tried to fend the man off, covering my eyes and face with my other hand. He lunged at me. Then I felt the blade of his knife slash my arm. Blood poured over my face. I couldn't see. I struck out blindly and in panic. I felt the man's heavy body slump against me. Suddenly we heard police car sirens and the screech of brakes. 'Help us,' I shouted. 'Help us!'

### Narrator

The other men quickly scattered. But the big man lay at her feet with blood pouring from his neck. Mariam told the police what had happened and handed over the broken bottle and knife. One police officer said: 'Don't worry, we'll get you cleaned up. This brute won't bother you girls anymore.'

### Mariam

Then they drove us to the police station. We begged them to call our parents.



[Show slide 8](#)

### Rami

I'm Rami, senior detective. I remember interviewing Prisoner 2794. At a guess, she was at least 21 years old. When I questioned her, she poured out a stream of lies.

It was clear to me that both the women were out in the park looking for someone to rob. The accused was not wearing a veil. Her hair was on display. I informed her that she had just stabbed a respected local businessman to death. I wrote down a statement of what happened and asked her to sign it.

**Show slide 9****Mariam's mother**

I am Mariam's mother. For days we were kept in the dark about what had happened that dreadful night. We didn't even know where our girls were. The police never called us. In the police station they hurt Mariam and made her sign a confession that wasn't true.

**Show slide 10****Mariam**

I wouldn't sign his paper. I didn't trust him. I said I wanted my mum. He slapped me really hard and said I had to sign or he'd keep little Yousra and me in the police station until we rotted. We were locked up for days. He beat me again several times. Eventually I signed his false document. Then they let Yousra go.

**Show slide 11****Samir**

My name is Samir. I am 17. My father was an honest man and ran his own business. I remember that evening in May. A group of Dad's friends came round to our house. They said some woman had attacked Dad in the park and killed him. I couldn't believe it. Dad was a big tough man. He had been in the army and he carried a knife. But he was murdered in cold blood.

The police caught the killer and she confessed, but my beloved father is gone. My mother is alone now, a widow. I want revenge. That evil killer must die.

**Show slide 12****Mariam's mother**

We are a poor family. We couldn't afford a lawyer. But we went to the court for Mariam's trial. Their whole case rested on the pack of lies and a false statement they had forced her to sign. Then that judge passed the sentence of death. He said he wanted to come down to the jail to do the hanging himself.



Show slide 13

## Nabil

My name is Nabil. I am a lawyer. I campaign to stop child executions. Thousands of people in this country have signed our petition against the use of the death penalty for under-18s. I am the lawyer for lots of young people who are on death row for crimes committed when they were still children. I have now taken up Mariam's case.

## Narrator

Around the world most countries have abolished the death penalty. It has virtually disappeared from Europe and South America. Many Muslim majority states like Turkey and Senegal have abolished executions. Across North and West Africa to the Middle East and Central Asia many more countries have not carried out an execution for years.



Show slide 14

Since the year 2000, nine countries executed at least 126 juvenile offenders, even though the use of the death penalty for crimes committed by people under 18 is against international law.

## Mariam

I told my lawyer what really happened that night. I was scared stiff, panicking and trying to protect my cousin. I am sorry for the man's family but I hope they will realise that the killing was an awful accident.

<p>Dear Sir</p> <p>I am a school student in the United Kingdom. I am writing to you about Prisoner 2794, a girl due to be hanged any day now for her involvement in a fatal stabbing when she was only 15. I am against all executions. But I'm especially against capital punishment for anybody who committed a crime as a child. Didn't this killing happen when Mariam was trying to defend a younger girl who was being attacked? It was a terrible accident and I have great sympathy for the family of the man who was killed.</p> <p>Your government is about to kill someone to show everybody that killing someone is wrong.</p> <p>Please, please stop this execution.</p> <p>Yours faithfully</p>
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Show slide 15

## Narrator

When we heard about Mariam's story in our school, our Amnesty International group sent letters about her case to the head of her country's legal system.

I wrote this to the Head of the Judiciary.

Dear Sir

I am a school student in the United Kingdom. I am writing to you about Prisoner 2794, a girl due to be hanged any day now for her involvement in a fatal stabbing when she was only 15.

I am against all executions. But I'm especially against capital punishment for anybody who committed a crime as a child. Didn't this killing happen when Mariam was trying to defend a younger girl who was being attacked? It was a terrible accident and I have great sympathy for the family of the man who was killed.

Your government is about to kill someone to show everybody that killing someone is wrong.

Please, please stop this execution.

Yours faithfully

## PAUSE



Show slide 16

### Nazim

The other day the order came to prepare Prisoner 2794 for execution.

I tied her hands behind her back. I took her out into the execution yard. She had to climb up on this high stool. I put the black cloth bag over her head. I put the noose round her neck. Then I waited for the order to kick the stool away from underneath her.



Show slide 17

### Mariam's mother

We were only told about Mariam's execution a few moments before she was to be killed. We had no time to say our final goodbyes. My daughter, to be hanged!

Then all of a sudden we heard that the Head of the Judiciary had ordered the postponement of the execution.

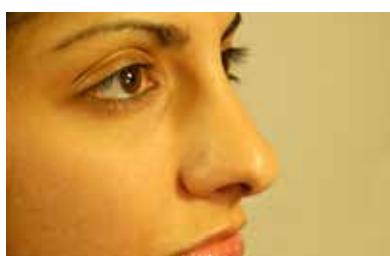
Lawyer Nabil had taken on Mariam's case for free. He is doing his best to organise an appeal.



Show slide 18

### Nabil

Under our country's law the family of the victim can choose what happens to the killer. They can ask for the death penalty. Or they can forgive the murderer if they pay a large sum of money as compensation. They call this blood money.



Show slide 19

### Mariam

My fate depends on whether the family can forgive me and accept the blood money. I expect forgiveness is the last thing on their minds.

**Show slide 20****Samir**

That killer's mother and cousin actually had the nerve to come to our home with a lawyer to plead for her life. 'Show mercy and forgiveness,' they said. What mercy and forgiveness did she show when she took the life of my dad? We want justice. An eye for an eye! A life for a life! Death for the murderer!

**Show slide 21****Mariam**

The lawyer asked if I had a message for the dead man's family. I said to say that I was a child when it happened. I said the man's death was a terrible accident and I am so sorry. I did something dreadfully wrong but so did he. I know his family must be suffering. They have lost their father. But please forgive me, please forgive me...

**PAUSE****Show slide 22****Mariam's mother**

'Hello, hello, is that Nabil? Have you any good news about Mariam's appeal?'

**Nabil**

'I'm so sorry, but I bring you very bad news. Despite all our efforts...'

**PAUSE****Show slide 23****Nazim**

At 6pm yesterday evening Prisoner 2794 was hanged.

**PAUSE****Narrator**

Amnesty International says juvenile offenders remain on death row in several countries around the world including Iran, South Sudan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Since the beginning of 2000 at least 126 juvenile offenders have been executed. It keeps happening.



Show slide 24

But there is hope. In Nigeria, Moses Akatugba was sentenced to death by hanging for stealing mobile phones when he was 16. Moses spent nearly 10 years in prison but was released from death row in 2015 with the help of Amnesty and other organisations.



Show slide 25

### Narrator

People like me are taking action against governments that still put under 18s to death. Perhaps you would like to take action too? Find out more information from your teacher or on Amnesty International's website  
[amnesty.org.uk/issues/death-penalty](http://amnesty.org.uk/issues/death-penalty)

Thank you for listening today.

# QUICK TEACHING IDEAS

Six short activities to enable discussion on different aspects of the death penalty.



Ali al-Nimr currently at imminent risk of execution © Private



Drawing by the daughter of Hamed Ahmadi © Private



Albert Woodfox, who spent longer in solitary confinement in the USA than anyone else, released in 2016 after serving 43 years ©AIUK

**1** Research the capital punishment debate of three world religions. Why are there different religious perspectives on this issue both within and between different religions? Create a soundbite from each of the religions to sum up the variety of their beliefs on the death penalty. Do you agree with their teachings? Why or why not?

**2** Research a prominent death penalty activist or a country which uses the death penalty, eg Sister Helen Prejean, activist and author of *Dead Man Walking* ([sisterhelen.org](http://sisterhelen.org)), or China, which executes more people than any other country. Talk about what you discover.

**3** Read 'My heart is exhausted', a mother's story of death row in Saudi Arabia. Ali al-Nimr was just 17 when he was arrested in 2012 for allegedly taking part in anti-government rallies and sentenced to death by beheading. He was tortured into a 'confession' and convicted in secret trials. Discuss his mother's views. Be aware that content is emotive. [www.amnesty.org.uk/saudi-ali-al-nimr](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/saudi-ali-al-nimr)

**4** Watch 'I owe my life to Amnesty' (2.44 minutes), a moving account by Hafez Ibrahim sentenced to death aged 16 in Yemen. How did he feel? In what ways were his human rights abused? Talk about what he has done with his life since his release. Go to YouTube (search title). [amn.st/dp-hafez-ibrahim](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amn.st/dp-hafez-ibrahim)

**5** Read and discuss the last written words of Hamed Ahmadi in a letter he wrote on death row and smuggled out of prison before he was executed in 2015. He talks about the constant threat of execution after an unfair trial.  
[www.amnesty.org.uk/iran-hamed-ahmadi](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/iran-hamed-ahmadi)

**6** Explore the impact of death row on families of prisoners and victims. Role play. Divide the class into two. Group 1 plays the brother or sister of the person on death row, Group 2 plays the brother or sister of the victim. How does it feel being in the shoes of both sides of crime and punishment? What impact has it had on you? If you supported the death penalty, do you think you would still be in favour of it if you knew someone on death row?

**BE CREATIVE** One school working on a death penalty project created an interactive prison cell in their canteen. They used tape on the floor to measure the space in solitary confinement – 9ft by 6ft in the case of Albert Woodfox, who spent 43 years in Louisiana's notorious Angola prison. Students could opt to spend lunch time in the 'cell' to see how it felt.

# SUMMARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaim in clear and simple terms the rights that belong equally to every person on this earth. These rights are your rights.

Your rights can be restricted only in limited circumstances, such as to protect other people's rights. No person or state may use any of the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to justify undermining the rights to which we are all entitled.

## **ARTICLE 1 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'**

You have the same human rights as everyone else in the world because you are a human being. These rights are inalienable – they cannot be taken away from you. Every individual, no matter who they are or where they live, should be treated with dignity.

## **ARTICLE 2 'Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind'**

You should not be deprived of any of your rights, because of your race, colour, sex, language, religion or political opinions. It should not matter what country you were born in, what social class you belong to, or how rich or poor you are.

## **ARTICLE 3 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person'**

We all have the right to live and to live in freedom and safety. No one should be arbitrarily killed or deprived of their liberty without good reason.

## **ARTICLE 4 'No one shall be held in slavery or servitude'**

Human beings must not be owned, bought or sold. No one has the right to enslave anyone else. Slavery is a crime.

## **ARTICLE 5 'No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment'**

Torture is forbidden in all circumstances. This applies everywhere – in police stations, prisons, on the streets, in peacetime or during a war.

## **ARTICLE 6 'Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law'**

We all have the right to be legally protected in the same way.

## **ARTICLE 7 'All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law'**

You have the right to be treated by law in the same way as everyone else. The law must treat us all fairly.

## **ARTICLE 8 'Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law'**

If your rights under the law are violated by someone else – be they another individual or a member of the police or security forces – you have the right to see justice done.

## **ARTICLE 9 'No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile'**

You may not be arrested or held in a police station or prison without good reason. You may not be kept out of your own country.

## **ARTICLE 10 'Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal'**

If you are accused of breaking the law, you have the right to a fair and public hearing. The courts must be independent from the government, competent to interpret the law and free to make their own decisions.

## **ARTICLE 11 'Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty'**

If you are accused of a crime, you have the right to be treated as innocent, unless or until you are proved guilty, according to the law, in a fair and public trial, where you are allowed to mount a proper defence.

## **ARTICLE 12 'No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon their honour and reputation'**

No one has the right to intrude in your private life or to interfere with your home or family. You have the right to ask to be protected if someone tries to harm your good name.

## **ARTICLE 13 'Everyone has the right to freedom of movement'**

You have the right to move about freely within your country. You also have the right to travel freely to and from your own country, and to leave any country.

## **ARTICLE 14 'Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution'**

If you are forced to flee your home because of human rights abuses, you have the right to seek safety in another country. This means that border police or other authorities may not refuse you entry, or return you to your own country, without proper consideration being given to your request for asylum.

## **ARTICLE 15 'Everyone has the right to a nationality'**

You have the right to be treated as a citizen of the country you come from. No one can take away your citizenship, or prevent you from changing your nationality, without good reason.

## **ARTICLE 16 'Men and women... have the right to marry and to found a family'**

All adults have the right to marry and have a family, regardless of their race, country or religion. Both partners have equal rights in the marriage, and their free and full agreement is needed for the marriage to take place. The family is entitled to protection by the state.

## **ARTICLE 17 'Everyone has the right to own property'**

You have the right to own goods, land and other property, alone or with other people. No one has the right to take these away without good reason.

## SUMMARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

### **ARTICLE 18 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion'**

You have the right to hold views on any issue without fear of punishment or censure. You also have the right to believe in any religion – or none at all. You have the right to change your religion if you wish, and to practise and teach your religion or beliefs.

### **ARTICLE 19 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression'**

You have the right to share your opinions – however unpopular – without fear of punishment, with people in your country and other countries.

### **ARTICLE 20 'Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association'**

You have the right to gather together with other people, in public or private. You have the right to hold meetings and organise peaceful demonstrations. Everyone has the right to form or join societies, trade unions, political groups and other associations. No one may force you to join any group if you do not wish to.

### **ARTICLE 21 'Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country'**

You have the right to be part of your government, either by being in it yourself or by choosing others to represent you. Governments have the authority to govern because they represent the will of the people. This means there should be free and fair elections on a regular basis.

### **ARTICLE 22 'Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation... of... economic, social and cultural rights'**

You have the right to have your basic needs met. Everyone is entitled to live in economic, social and cultural conditions that allow them dignity and let them develop as individuals. All countries should do everything they can to make this happen.

### **ARTICLE 23 'Everyone has the right to work... Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions'**

You have the right to work in fair and safe conditions and to choose your job, and receive a salary to allow you to live and support your family. You also have the right to form or join a trade union to protect your interests.

### **ARTICLE 24 'Everyone has the right to rest and leisure'**

You have the right to time off from work. No one may force you to work unreasonable hours, and you have the right to holidays with pay.

### **ARTICLE 25 'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for... health and well-being'**

We all have the right to a decent life, including adequate food, clothing, housing, medical care and social services. Society should help those unable to work because they are unemployed, sick, disabled or too old. Mothers and children are entitled to special care and assistance.

### **ARTICLE 26 'Everyone has the right to education'**

Everyone has the right to an education. It should be free of charge, and everyone should be required to complete at least the early years of schooling. Education at a higher level should be equally available to everyone on the basis of merit. Education should strengthen respect for human rights.

### **ARTICLE 27 'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community'**

No one may stop you joining in cultural events organised in your community. You have the right to enjoy music, plays, exhibitions, poetry or any other form of artistic or collective expression. You have the right to share in the benefits that scientific discovery may bring.

### **ARTICLE 28 'Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised'**

Human beings have the right to live in the kind of world where their rights and freedoms are respected.

### **ARTICLE 29 'Everyone has duties to the community'**

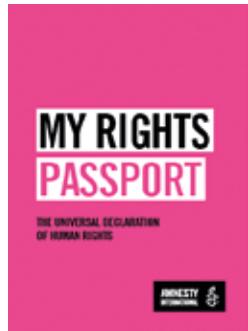
We all have a responsibility to the people around us, and we can only develop fully as individuals by taking care of each other. All the rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can only be limited by law and only if necessary to protect other people's rights, meet society's sense of right and wrong, maintain order and look after the welfare of society as a whole.

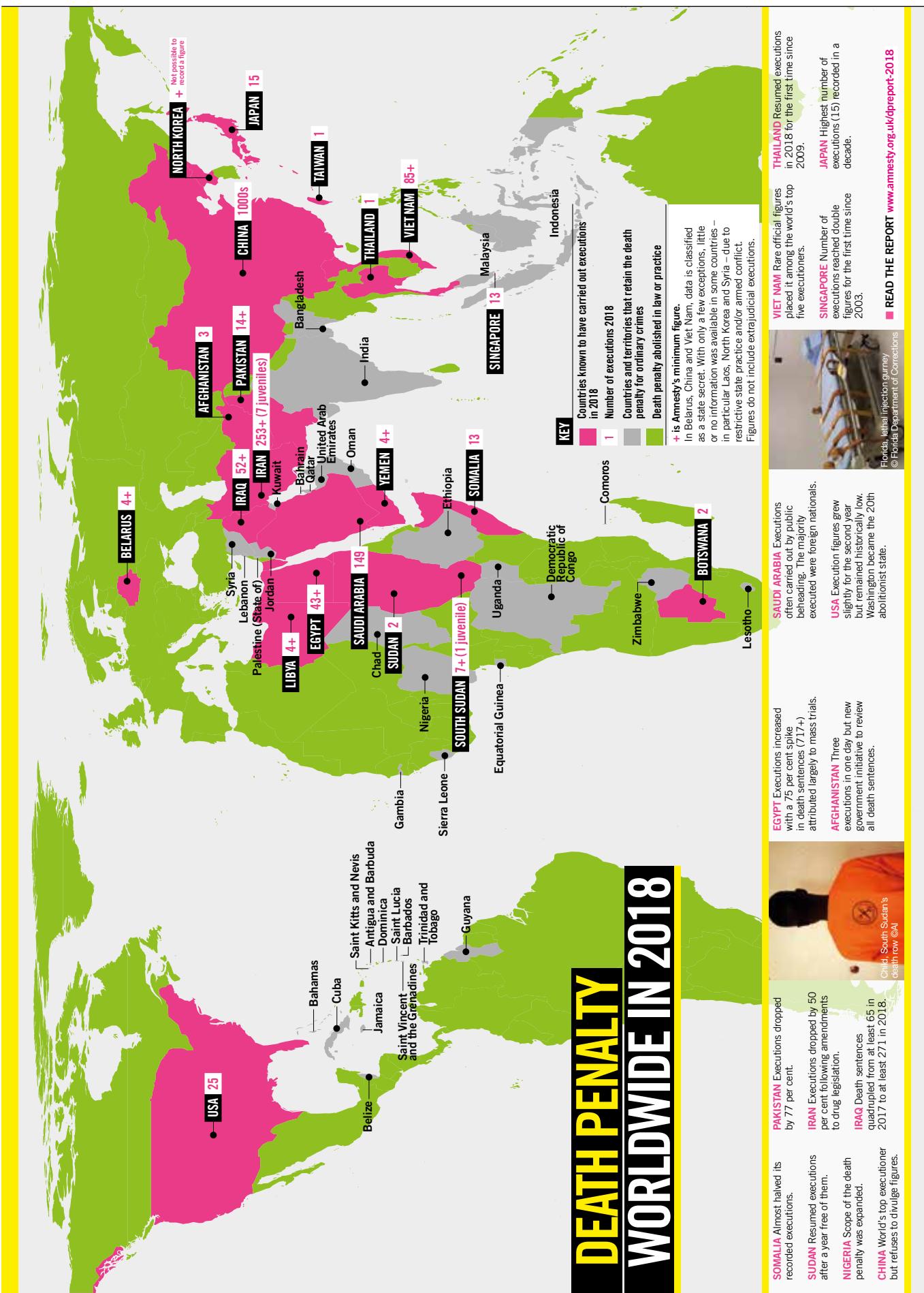
### **ARTICLE 30 'No governments, groups or individuals should destroy any of these rights or freedoms'**

No society and no human being should act in such a way as to destroy the rights and freedoms set out in this declaration to which we are all entitled.

■ This is a simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by Amnesty International UK. To see the full version, go to [amnesty.org.uk/universal](http://amnesty.org.uk/universal)

This text is from My Rights Passport, which contains a brief history of human rights and the articles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Order individual copies or free class packs by quoting code ED112 from 01788 545553, [sct@amnesty.org.uk](mailto:sct@amnesty.org.uk)





# GLOSSARY

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**Death penalty**

When the state punishes people by putting them to death.

**Abolitionist for all crimes**

Countries whose laws do not provide for the death penalty for any crime.

**Abolitionist for ordinary crimes**

Countries whose laws provide for the death penalty only for exceptional crimes, such as crimes under military law or during war.

**Abolitionist in practice**

Countries that retain the death penalty in law for ordinary crimes such as murder but have not executed anyone in the past 10 years and are believed to have a policy or established practice of not carrying out executions.

**Retentionist**

Countries that retain the death penalty in law for ordinary crimes, such as murder and drug trafficking, in times of peace and do not meet criteria for ‘abolitionist in practice’.

**Clemency**

An act showing mercy or leniency by reducing or even completely eradicating a sentence; used as a general term covering both commutations and pardons.

**Commutation**

Replacing the death sentence by a less severe punishment, such as a term of imprisonment.

**Pardon**

When the convicted person is completely exempted from further punishment; a pardon can be granted for a variety of reasons.

**Exoneration**

After sentencing and the conclusion of the appeals process, the convicted person is later freed from blame or acquitted of the original criminal charge, and therefore is regarded as innocent in the eyes of the law.

**Most serious crimes**

The only category of crimes for which international law allows the death penalty. International bodies have interpreted this as being limited to crimes involving intentional killing.

**Moratorium on executions/on the use of the death penalty**

An official decision to stop executing people, or even to stop imposing death sentences, but without abolishing the death penalty altogether. A moratorium is not necessarily permanent: whatever government or court imposed it can reverse its decision.

# USEFUL RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONS

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## Amnesty International

**Death Penalty Report, 2018**  
[amnesty.org.uk/dpreport-2018](http://amnesty.org.uk/dpreport-2018)

**Campaign work**

[amnesty.org.uk/issues/death-penalty](http://amnesty.org.uk/issues/death-penalty)

**The Death Penalty – Your questions answered**

[amn.st/dpQA](http://amn.st/dpQA)

**Nine videos to help you talk about the death penalty**

[amn.st/dp-education-videos](http://amn.st/dp-education-videos)

**Amnesty International case studies to explore**

- Reggie Clemons, USA
- Hakamado Iwao, Japan
- Zeinab Sekaanvand, Iran

## Elsewhere on the web

**Fair Trials**  
[fairtrials.org](http://fairtrials.org)

**World Coalition Against the Death Penalty**  
[worldcoalition.org](http://worldcoalition.org)

**Death Penalty Information Centre**  
[www.deathpenaltyinfo.org](http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)

**Reprieve**  
[reprieve.org.uk](http://reprieve.org.uk)

**Stop Child Executions**  
[stopchildexecutions.com](http://stopchildexecutions.com)

**International Commission Against The Death Penalty**  
[icomdp.org](http://icomdp.org)

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