

LESSON 2

UNITED NATIONS DEATH PENALTY DEBATE



ABOUT THIS LESSON

Students will hold a mock United Nations (UN) debate on the worldwide use of the death penalty. It is loosely based on a planned debate on the death penalty due to start at the UN General Assembly in October 2010 (see background below).

Each student will be appointed as the ambassador of a member state and will be asked to consider whether the death penalty should be restricted or even abolished around the world.

Each ambassador is given briefing notes outlining their position on the debate. These briefing notes are fictitious, although each suggested position broadly reflects the country's historical background and incorporates teachings from that country's dominant religious tradition and political position. Through this lesson students are able to explore the influence of religious teachings on political decision-making as well as further consider arguments for and against the death penalty explored in Lesson 1.

Background to this mock UN debate

On 18 December 2007, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution 62/149 calling for a worldwide moratorium (freeze) on executions with a view to abolition. The resolution was adopted by an overwhelming majority of 104 UN member states in favour, 54 against and 29 abstentions. It was the first time the UN General Assembly approved a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. In that debate, Italy and Malaysia took the lead roles, as in our lesson plan.

A second resolution on the death penalty was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 18 December 2008 on the implementation of the 2007 UNGA resolution 62/149. Support had increased: 106 states voted in favour, 46 against and 34 abstained. These resolutions are not legally binding but have moral force. They are a step towards global abolition of the death penalty.

A similar resolution will be considered at the 65th UN General Assembly at the end of 2010. This lesson is loosely based on this planned debate.

TIME

1-2 lessons/1-2 hours

(or up to three hours to cover more detail).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson encourages students to:

- understand the process of a UN debate on a global issue;
- present arguments for a particular point of view on the death penalty, including opposing ones and persuade others to support position;
- critically evaluate different viewpoints on the death penalty;
- consider how to take informed action on the issue.

SKILLS

Discussion, debate, questioning, reflection; interpretation and critical analysis of sources; presenting a convincing argument not always your own; advocacy and representation.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Please refer to DVD.

PRIOR LEARNING

This lesson assumes knowledge of the death penalty, including arguments for and against its use, and of the aims and workings of the United Nations.

WHAT YOU NEED

Available on the DVD unless otherwise stated.

For each student:

- An ambassador role card, which includes a country name and flag, along with an accompanying set of ambassador briefing notes (fold in half and display on desk)
- The Italian motion (one per student)
- For and against the death penalty information sheet
- Glossary
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights summary version (also in folder pocket)

For the teacher:

- A UN flag
- Chair's briefing notes

LESSON 2

UNITED NATIONS DEATH PENALTY DEBATE

USEFUL LINKS

- www.amnesty.org.uk/education
A selection of death penalty lesson plans and educational resources.
- www.amnesty.org.uk and www.amnesty.org
The latest death penalty reports and campaign cases.
- www.unesco.org.uk/unmatters
UNA-UK teaching pack on the United Nations.

HOW TO PREPARE

In addition to preparing the resources, also identify confident debaters and good organisers in the class for the key roles in this activity:

- The Italian ambassador, who will present the motion on behalf of the European Union and other sponsors.
- The Malaysian ambassador, who will lead the opposition to the motion.
- Key opponents of the death penalty, including South Africa, Canada and Guinea-Bissau.
- Key supporters of the death penalty, including China, US, Sudan and Cuba.

There are 30 ambassador role cards. If you have fewer than 30 students in your class, try to get a balance between ambassadors who will probably be for the motion, those against and those undecided. Some role cards are more complex than others (see key below). Assign accordingly.

Probable country positions on the death penalty in the debate:

Countries probably against executions and for the Italian motion	Probably undecided countries	Countries probably for executions and against the Italian motion
Italy (for the EU) ▲ Angola ▲ Australia ▲ Azerbaijan ▲ Bhutan ▲ Brazil ★ Bulgaria ▲ Canada ▲ Guinea Bissau ▲ Mexico ★ Nepal ▲ Poland ★ South Africa ★	Algeria ★ El Salvador ★ Ethiopia ★ India ★ Israel ★ Lebanon ★ Malawi ▲	Botswana ★ China ★ Cuba ★ Egypt ▲ Indonesia ★ Jamaica ▲ Malaysia ▲ Singapore ▲ Sudan ▲ USA ★
<p>Key: ★ = Higher level of difficulty ▲ = Low/medium level of difficulty</p>		

LESSON PLAN

1 PREPARING FOR THE DEBATE

Time: 10-15 minutes

Introduce the learning objectives as appropriate with the class. Read through the *Glossary* as a class and explain and discuss key words (eg United Nations, motion, abolition, moratorium, caucus) for the UN debate.

Tell the class they will be posing as ambassadors to the UN, and explain that they are about to debate a motion from Italy calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. Hand out copies of the *Italian motion* and read through as a class. Explain that you will chair the debate.

Assign each student to a country and hand out the appropriate ambassador role cards, with secret briefing notes. They should fold their card in half so their country name and flag is facing outwards, and their secret ambassador's briefing is facing them. Explain that being familiar with their country is an important part of this activity; students should read their briefing but keep the contents confidential.

Inform the students that the briefing notes come in two parts:

- Background information about the country they are representing.
- Their position in the debate, which gives students possible arguments to use – including religious, political, financial and moral arguments – and suggested voting tactics.

Make it clear that these briefings are totally imaginary, but loosely based on their country's history, its main religion and its record on the death penalty. Explain that when making their arguments, students should do so 'in role' (please see Teaching Controversial Issues on page 8) convincingly – even if this is a position that they don't personally share. Explain that ambassadors, particularly the undecided ones, may change their position within reason after listening to both sides of the debate. Some powerful countries may even try to pressure, threaten or bribe them into changing their vote.

2 THE CAUCUS

Time: 25 minutes

Explain that the caucus refers to an informal discussion session where off-the-record discussions occur and ambassadors prepare for the debate. This is usually the time ambassadors plot their strategy and work out who is going to present the different arguments for their side. To have any chance of winning the debate, ambassadors must also lobby other ambassadors, particularly the undecided ones, to try to persuade them to join their side.

Hand out the *For and against the death penalty* information sheet, which summarises the main arguments. Students will also find arguments suggested on their briefing notes.

LESSON 2

UNITED NATIONS DEATH PENALTY DEBATE

Start the caucus.

- All the ambassadors who are for the motion should meet with the Italian ambassador to work out their main and strongest arguments against the death penalty. Ask them to decide who should present which arguments.
- All the ambassadors who are against the motion should meet with the Malaysian ambassador to work out their main and strongest arguments for keeping the death penalty. Ask them to decide who should present each argument.
- Undecided ambassadors should meet together to discuss which way they will vote.

The other ambassadors should then approach undecided ambassadors to try to get them to vote for/against the motion.

3 SPEECH PREPARATION

Time: 10 minutes

Ask your students to prepare their speeches for the debate. They should use their briefing notes and make their speech around one minute long.

4 THE DEBATE

Time: 30-45 minutes

If possible lay the room out with seats in a horseshoe shape with the Chair's desk at the front with the UN flag displayed on it. Students should fold their role card in half and stand it on the desk in front of them, so the flag is displayed to the class while the ambassador can read the briefing notes. You may wish to search the Internet for a photo of the UN General Assembly to show students.

Begin by introducing the debate and setting the scene in your role as Chair. Ask students to raise their role cards if they'd like to speak, and choose delegates to be placed on the speakers list. Then invite the Italian ambassador to formally read out the motion and give his or her speech.

Call up the ambassadors on the speakers list one by one to address the committee. If possible move from a country for the motion to one undecided to one who is probably against.

Once the speakers list is finished, call for a vote by a show of hands, first those for the motion, then those against the motion, and then those abstaining.

5 THE DE-BRIEF

Time: 15-20 minutes

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

- 1 How did you find your experience of being an ambassador? Has it changed your perception of the death penalty?
- 2 What factors influence the position that a country takes on an issue like the death penalty?
- 3 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?

- 4 Do you think it's right that countries can choose whether or not to use the death penalty for themselves? What could the role of the UN be in issues such as the death penalty?

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

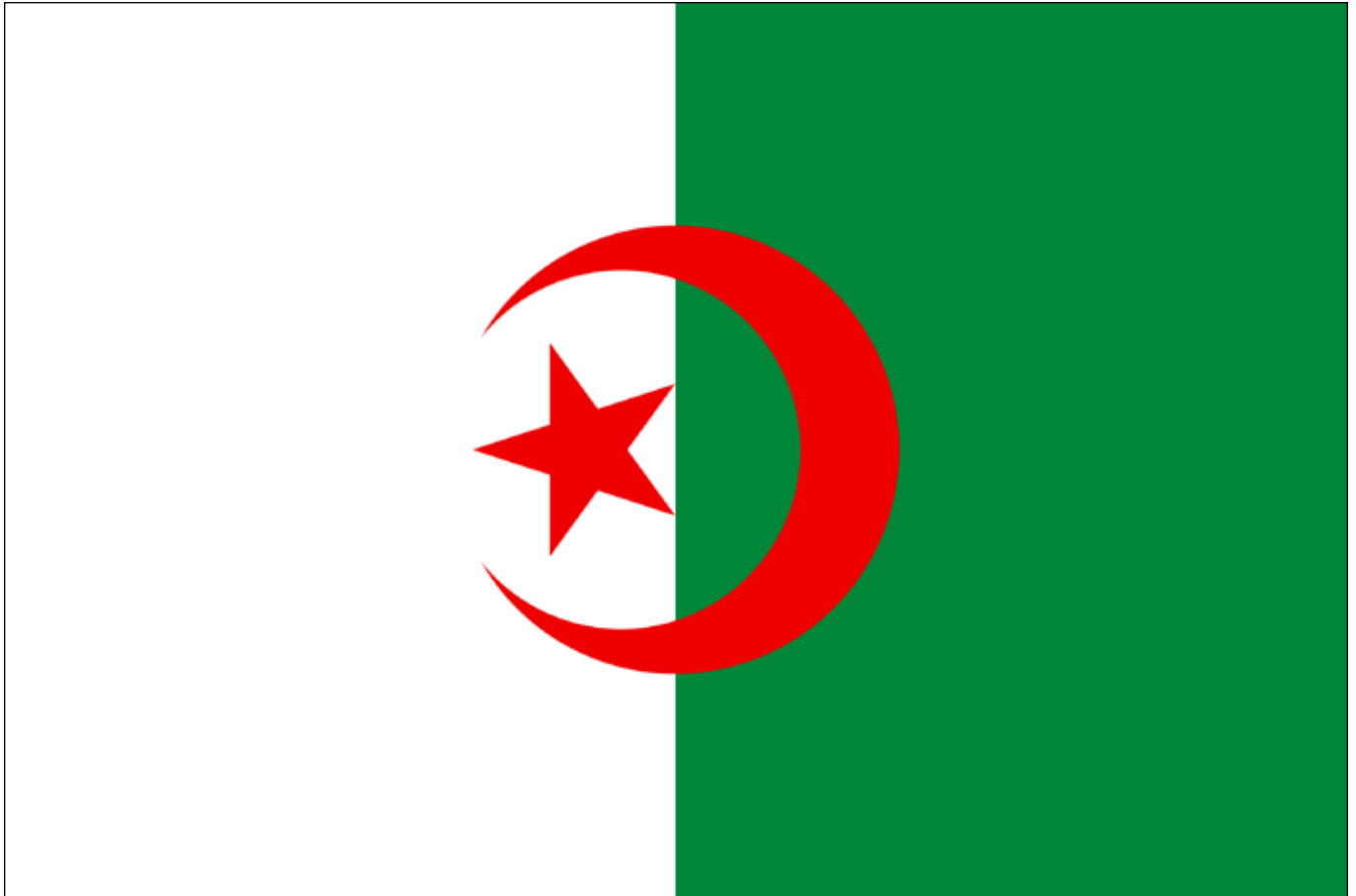
- Factors that influence a country's position on the death penalty include:
 - religious considerations such as the teachings of the official religion of the country;
 - political considerations such as popularity with voters, crime rates, influence and relationships with other countries;
 - economic 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 the 'turn the other cheek' (New Testament).
- 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.

EXTENSION/HOMEWORK

- Explain to students that the debate that they have been taking part in is similar to one which is planned to start at the United Nations General Assembly in October 2010. Ask students to submit their views or consider how they could take action to campaign for the abolition of the death penalty in advance of this vote.

TAKING ACTION

- For those interested in getting involved in death penalty activism as a result of this learning, you and your students can go to www.amnesty.org.uk/lifeanddeath for more information. If students wish to set up a youth group see page 22 of this booklet and information on the DVD.



ALGERIA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES ALGERIA



Your country is:

Abolitionist in practice.

While judges continue to issue the death sentence – particularly in cases related to terrorism – Algeria has not executed a prisoner since 1993 when an official moratorium (suspension) on executions was declared. In 2009, 100 people were sentenced to death.

Country information

Algeria is located in North Africa and has 34.9 million people.

Your position in the debate

Algerians are locked in a vigorous debate over the suspension of the death penalty introduced in 1993. In 2008 Algeria co-sponsored and voted in favour of the resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty at the UN General Assembly. However, in 2009 the government rejected a bill to abolish the death penalty proposed by an opposition parliamentarian.

You might argue that, with a moratorium (freeze) on the use

of the death penalty in place for years, capital punishment is outdated, and the penalty for serious crimes should be life imprisonment. The death penalty also harms the nation's reputation.

The vast majority of the population is Muslim. The Holy Qur'an says that everyone has the right to life, except when a court of law demands the death penalty: 'Do not kill a Soul which Allah has made sacred except through the due process of law.' It also says in the Qur'an that two of the most important of Allah's most beautiful names are al-Rahman (the Merciful) and al-Rahim (the Compassionate) which suggests the importance of forgiveness in Islam.

You are currently undecided about which way to vote or whether to vote at all. Perhaps the death penalty should never be used any more in your country, or just in extreme cases against terrorists? In the caucus, listen to both sides of the argument.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



ANGOLA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES ANGOLA



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

The death penalty was abolished in 1992. In 2010, Angola approved a new Constitution that keeps the death penalty banned.

Country information

Angola is a country in Western sub-Saharan Africa with a population of 18.5 million.

Your position in the debate

Angola suffered a brutal 27-year civil war from 1975; approximately 500,000 were killed. You might argue that your country knows the horror and pain death represents and will always defend the right to life. And the death penalty is the cruellest, most inhuman and degrading form of torture.

Around 40 per cent of Angolans are Christians. From a religious perspective, you might argue that Jesus Christ suffered the injustice of the death penalty by crucifixion

and he preached forgiveness rather than retribution – so you oppose executions on religious grounds, full stop.

Join the Italians in the caucus. Try to persuade Botswana, South Africa, Malawi and other fellow African nations to support the Italian motion.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



AUSTRALIA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES AUSTRALIA



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

Australia abolished the death penalty in 1984. The last execution took place in 1967.

Country information

Australia is an island continent in the South Pacific with a population of 21.3 million.

Your position in the debate

The death penalty is widely condemned by most Australians, and there are no plans to restore it. Australia has signed the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which aims at the abolition of the death penalty. In 2010 the Federal Parliament passed laws ensuring the death penalty can never be reintroduced by any state or territory in Australia. You could argue this is the hallmark of a civilised society, and when mistakes are made the consequences are serious. People have been executed who are later found to have been innocent. The death penalty is irrevocable (can't be reversed).

Argue that life imprisonment is a better alternative.

There can never be any justification for torture or for cruel treatment. Like torture, an execution constitutes an extreme physical and mental assault on an individual. It doesn't give criminals the chance to repent.

You might also argue that the state carrying out executions turns us all into killers. Murdering people who murder is hypocritical.

There is no official religion in your country.

Join the Italians in the caucus. You wish their motion was stronger, and that it called for the end of all executions all over the world immediately.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



AZERBAIJAN

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES AZERBAIJAN



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

You are proud to have abolished the death penalty in 1998.

Country information

Azerbaijan is located on the border of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. It has 8.8 million citizens.

Your position in the debate

Your country has ratified (confirmed it will abide by) an international treaty (Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, with the option to use it in times of war.

You believe the time has come to abolish the death penalty worldwide. You could argue that experience shows that executions brutalise those involved in the process and nowhere has it been shown that the death penalty has any special power to reduce crime or political violence.

Ninety-three per cent of the population is Muslim, although

the government is secular (not based on a religion).

Azerbaijan was the first democratic and secular country in the Muslim world. From a religious perspective, point out that Islam is a faith of peace, justice and service and a civilizing force for humanity. The most common Muslim greeting is 'As-Salámu `Alaykum' which means 'Peace be upon you'. Islam forbids violence, especially against innocent and defenceless people. The Holy Qur'an praises the merciful (forgiving). You might argue that the whole process of capital punishment undermines human dignity treating human life with total disrespect.

Join the Italians in the caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



BHUTAN

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES **BHUTAN**



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

In 2004 the King of Bhutan issued a Royal Decree abolishing the death penalty. The last known execution took place in 1964.

Country information

Bhutan is an Asian mountain kingdom of around 697,000 people.

Your position in the debate

Bhutan is a Buddhist nation, and capital punishment is seen as a contradiction to the basic beliefs of Buddhism. You believe firmly in the principle of non-violence and respect for life, ahimsa. This is a rule of conduct that bars the killing or injuring of living things. So in your belief, the death penalty is not justifiable.

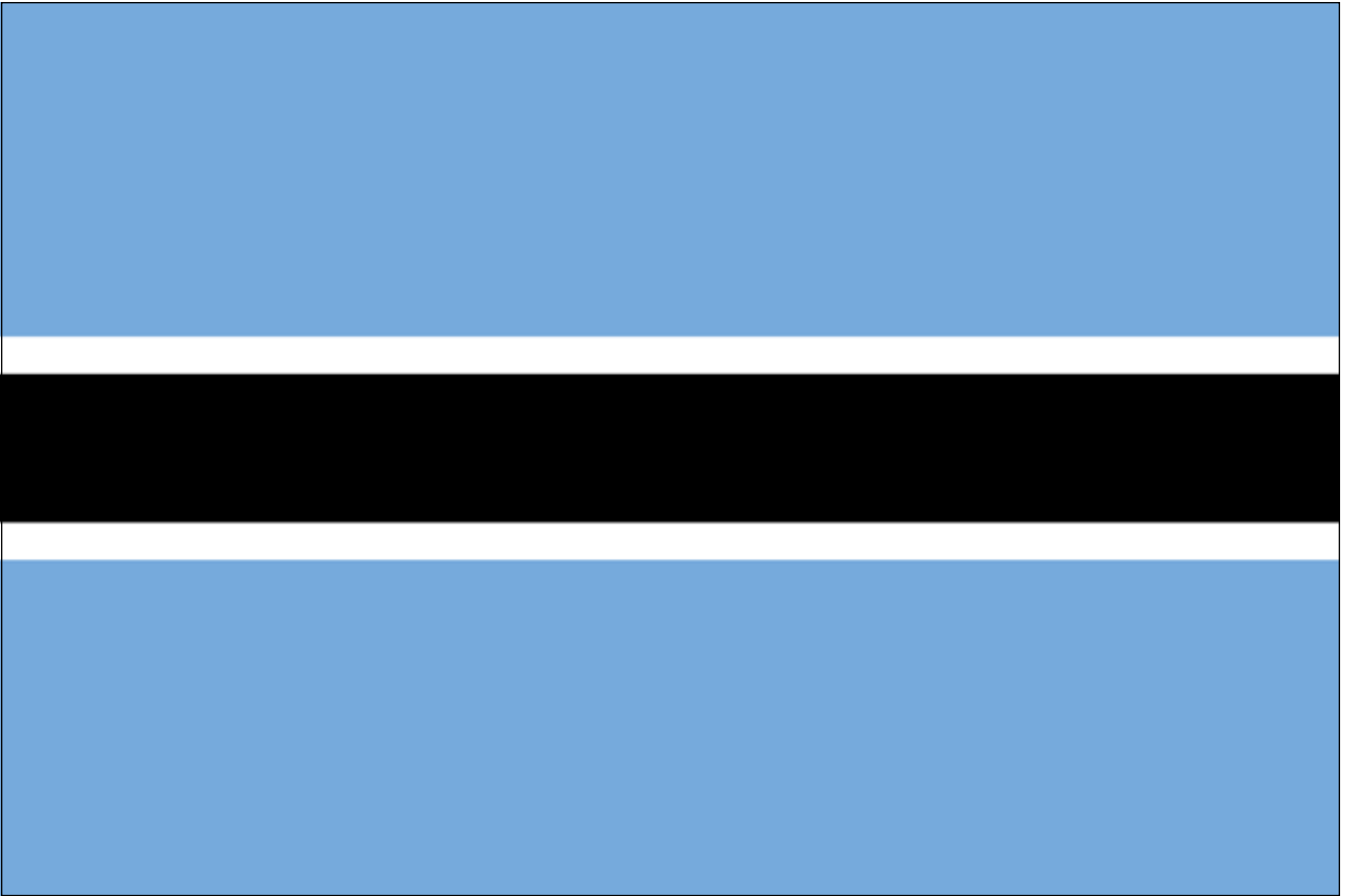
You might add that respect for life is an idea of fundamental importance in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 3 'Everyone has the Right to life...'

Article 5 'No one should be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment...'

Join the Italians in the caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



BOTSWANA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES **BOTSWANA**



Your country is:

Retentionist.

The death penalty has been in force here since the country gained independence from Britain in 1965. It is applied for murder, treason and piracy. In 2009, two people were sentenced to death and one person was executed.

Country information

Botswana is a country of 1.9 million people in Southern Africa.

Your position in the debate

Botswana's stance on the death penalty isn't about to be swayed. Executions cannot take place without a warrant signed by the president. Clemency (leniency or mercy) has never been granted. Defend your position by saying it is the will of the citizens.

You are also a Christian nation. Point out that the Bible clearly calls for 'an eye for an eye'. If you take someone's life, you forfeit your own.

You oppose the motion from Italy and the 'bully boy' tactics of the former colonial countries such as the UK, who you feel are always trying to tell former colonies how to manage their internal affairs.

In your speech you might ask that other countries that are so passionately in favour of the right to life should consider their other policies such as involvement in wars and military operations.

Join the Malaysians in the caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



BRAZIL

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES **BRAZIL**



Your country is:

Abolitionist for ordinary crimes only.

Capital punishment was last used as a form of punishment in 1876 and has not been officially used since the proclamation of the Republic in 1889. It was finally abolished by the 1988 Constitution, with the exception of crimes of treason committed in war time.

Country information

Brazil is the largest country in South America and has a population of 193.7 million.

Your position in the debate

Brazil regards the death penalty as a cruel and inhuman punishment that degrades human life. Brazil is also one of the few countries in the world that has abolished life sentences – a citizen cannot spend more than 30 years in prison. Argue that we should be thinking of a way to rehabilitate criminals, and laws need to ensure justice not revenge.

Most Brazilians are Catholics and believe that forgiveness is a key value.

In 2008 Brazil co-sponsored and voted in favour of the resolution on a moratorium (freeze) on the use of the death penalty at the UN General Assembly.

Join the Italians in the caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



BULGARIA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES **BULGARIA**



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

Your country was in favour of the death penalty when it was a Communist state and throughout the 1980s had one of the highest execution rates in Europe. However, Bulgaria changed its views and practices and abolished the death penalty in 1998.

Country information

Bulgaria is in Eastern Europe and has a population of 7.5 million.

Your position in the debate

Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007. The EU is opposed to the use of capital punishment in all cases and in all circumstances – you will be keen to show your commitment to the EU and human rights.

You might argue that there is no humane way to execute a human being; every method used to kill people is very cruel. Also, any miscarriage of justice, inevitable in any legal system, is irreversible.

Most people in Bulgaria are Orthodox Christians. You might argue that killing anyone through an execution is wrong, as it would prevent the possibility of a person making amends for their actions.

Join the Italians in the caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



CANADA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES CANADA



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

Canada abolished the death penalty for all crimes in 1998. The last known execution was in 1962.

Country information

Canada is the second largest country in the world, after Russia, but has only one fifth of the population – 33.6 million people.

Your position in the debate

When Canada abolished the death penalty, many people said that the murder rate would rise. But the murder rate actually dropped. In your opinion this shows that the threat of execution does not act as a deterrent (ie the fear of capital punishment if you are caught actually doesn't stop murder).

Most Canadians are Catholics. Pope John Paul II was strongly against capital punishment. In 1995 he called the thousands of people on death row awaiting executions 'a macabre assembly line of death'.

You might argue that capital punishment is the premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being by the state in the name of justice.

Join the Italians in the caucus. Talk with Algeria and try to persuade the ambassador to vote with you.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



CHINA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES CHINA



Your country is:

Retentionist.

China executes more people than the rest of the world put together. However, statistics remain classified as state secrets and while executions numbered into the thousands in 2009, the government did not release actual figures. Approximately sixty-eight offences in China are capital crimes (eg punishable by the death penalty) including tax evasion, killing pandas and stealing antiques. Executions are carried out by shooting a bullet into the back of the head or by lethal injection.

Country information

China is the most populous country in the world with 1.3 billion citizens.

Your position in the debate

You might argue that your country is faced with a crime wave. Lots of criminals are trying to destroy China and the Communist system. In your opinion, as soon as someone has been found guilty of a capital crime, they should be quickly and humanely killed. If other UN member states

followed your example there would be much less crime in the world.

Like more than 80 per cent of Chinese people, you don't believe in religion at all. As an atheist, religious considerations about the death penalty are of no interest to you.

Argue that this debate is not a human rights issue. The death penalty is not banned under international law. This is just an attempt by some states to interfere in the internal affairs of your country.

Argue against the Italian motion. Join Malaysia in the caucus. Work together with Malaysia, the USA and Cuba.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



CUBA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES CUBA



Your country is:

Retentionist.

Cuba retains the death penalty as punishment for murder, hijacking, the corruption of children, drug smuggling and armed robbery. However, it stopped carrying out executions in 2003. Three people remained on death row at the end of 2009 charged with terrorism; most death sentences were commuted to prison terms of 30 years by President Raúl Castro in 2008.

Country information

Cuba is an island state in the Caribbean with a population of 11.2 million.

Your position in the debate

Despite commuting death sentences, President Raúl Castro said: 'It would be irresponsible and ingenuous to renounce the dissuasive power that capital punishment has on the real terrorists.' You might argue that Cuba needs the death penalty to deal with a small number of villains and terrorists who are responsible for the most serious crimes. If you didn't have the threat of execution

(shooting by firing squad) there would be chaos on the streets of Havana. Like most Cubans you are an atheist socialist, so religious ideas are of no particular interest to you.

Join Malaysia in the caucus. Try to get El Salvador and Brazil to vote with you. But watch how the USA is going to vote. Traditionally, Cuba has been so against the Americans and their anti-Cuban policies that it would vote the opposite way or abstain. Since the election of Barack Obama as president of the USA, however, Cuba and the USA have begun to thaw relations.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



EGYPT

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES EGYPT



Your country is:

Retentionist.

Egypt retains the death penalty. In 2009, at least 269 death sentences were imposed by the courts, and at least five prisoners were executed.

Country information

Egypt is the most populous country in the Middle East with 83 million people.

Your position in the debate

You might argue that executions are the only solution to halt Egypt's soaring crime rates. This includes drug pushers who cause untold social damage, and extremist groups who constitute a grave terrorist threat.

Murder is also a big problem on the streets of Cairo. Those who condemn capital punishment against murderers as being too tough and cruel should be asked to think about what happens to the victims? What about the irreversible loss of their families? You might also argue it is more

humane to put someone to death than to keep them locked up for years.

Point out that your society has its own beliefs and standards, and you have no interest in imitating other societies in this matter.

Egypt is a secular (non-religious) state and religious political parties are banned.

Join Malaysia in the caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



EL SALVADOR

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES EL SALVADOR



Your country is:

Abolitionist for ordinary crimes only.

El Salvador abolished the death penalty for ordinary crimes in peacetime in 1983.

Country information

El Salvador is a small Central American state with a population of 6.2 million.

Your position in the debate

In El Salvador moderate left-wing President Mauricio Funes, elected in 2009, is unlikely to restore the death penalty.

You might argue that executions are irrevocable (ie once someone is executed the sentence can't be undone). The death penalty is a dangerous sentence especially in countries where the legal system is weak. Dreadful mistakes can and have been made by some of the best courts in the world, sending innocent people to their deaths.

From a religious perspective, you support the Catholic Catechism (official teaching of the Catholic Church) that decrees the death penalty to be permissible only in rare circumstances, when a society does not have the means to keep its citizens safe from criminals, for example in war time.

Join the Italians in the caucus. Listen to both sides of the debate. Speak to the Canadian ambassador with the Cubans and Brazilians.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



ETHIOPIA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES **ETHIOPIA**



Your country is:

Retentionist.

Ethiopia still keeps the death penalty in law as punishment for murder, but it is rarely used. There have only been two executions since 1991. In 2009 at least 11 people were sentenced to death but no executions were reported.

Country information

Ethiopia is a country in East Africa with a population of 82.8 million.

Your position in the debate

Several dozen people you consider war criminals and terrorists have been condemned to death in Ethiopia in recent years. The death penalty is an important deterrent and countries should be able to use it for this purpose. However your President, an Orthodox Christian, usually commutes death sentences to life imprisonment. This may reflect the reverence for life and forgiveness that are of profound importance in the Christian faith.

Ethiopian public opinion and the families of the victims of capital crimes do want executions, though, and consider they are a legal and effective form of punishment. And if only one potential murderer, assassin or terrorist is deterred from committing a capital crime because he or she fears the death penalty, it has worked to keep innocent people safe.

You are undecided about how to vote. Listen to the debate. Possibly vote against the Italians, the old colonial power, or don't vote at all. Talk with fellow African representatives from South Africa and Malawi. See what Sudan is going to do and perhaps vote the exact opposite way to them (because of Ethiopia's history of disputes with this neighbouring country).

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



GUINEA-BISSAU

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES GUINEA-BISSAU



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

Your country has been abolitionist since 1993, with the last known execution having taken place in 1986.

Country information

Guinea-Bissau is a small country in West Africa with a population of 1.6 million.

Your position in the debate

More than half the people of Guinea-Bissau are Animists (which refers to a religious belief that souls or spirits exist in animals, plants and other entities, as well as humans). Most of the rest are Muslim. Animists believe in a world of spirits in living creatures and nature. As an animist you have a profound respect for life and oppose the death penalty.

In your speech you could also argue that courts make terrible mistakes. Innocent people can be found guilty and be killed. This has happened in England and America and in many other countries.

You might also highlight the disgust that most people feel when they hear accounts of individuals being tortured. Surely we should feel even more disgusted by the use of torture methods to deliberately kill someone by hanging, beheading, lethal injection, electrocution or shooting to death.

Join the Italian caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



INDIA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES INDIA



Your country is:

Retentionist.

India retains the death penalty carried out by hanging as the final punishment for the most serious crimes, but it was decided by the Supreme Court in 1983 that it should only be used on the 'rarest of rare occasions'. Under Indian law, the death penalty can be imposed for: murder, robbery leading to death, encouraging the suicide of a child or insane person, waging war against the government and encouraging mutiny by the armed forces and terrorism. At least 50 people were sentenced to death in 2009 although no executions took place.

Country information

India is the second most populous country in the world with nearly 1.2 billion inhabitants.

Your position in the debate

India voted against a death penalty moratorium in the UN General Assembly in 2007 and 2008. But with no executions since 2004, your country is stuck between joining the abolition trend and clinging to the notion that

the death penalty is an effective measure against crime and terrorism.

Eighty-five per cent of India's people are Hindu, 13 per cent Muslim, 2 per cent Sikh and 2 per cent Christian. Hindu teachings can be used to justify arguments both for and against the death penalty. Hinduism teaches ahimsa (non-violence) and the holy Hindu scripture, the Mahabharata, contains passages against the death penalty. However, Hindu teaching also says that death is limited to the physical body because the soul (atman) is reborn into another body upon death. In the process of reincarnation, humans who have committed severe crimes suffer a lower re-birth, and therefore death can bring justice.

You are undecided. You could vote against the Italian resolution or you could abstain. Talk with the other Asian countries in the debate such as Bhutan, Nepal, China, Indonesia and Singapore before making up your mind.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



INDONESIA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES INDONESIA



Your country is:

Retentionist.

For the first time since 2004, no executions were reported in 2009. However, at least 117 people remained under sentence of death and 10 people were executed by firing squad in 2008. Crimes that can result in the death penalty include drug trafficking, murder and terrorism.

Country information

Indonesia consists of a chain of islands between Asia and Australia. It has a population of 230 million and the world's largest Muslim population.

Your position in the debate

You will argue strongly against Italy and the EU resolution. President Yudhoyono is in favour of widening the use of the death penalty, in contrast to the global trend towards abolishing the death penalty, and has fought against Australia's pressure to end the practice.

You are furious with the way that the West is trying as usual to interfere in the internal affairs of Asian countries.

What business is it of theirs how Indonesia's legal system deals with drug traffickers, traitors and murderers? Say that the UN should be dealing with real human rights questions like hunger and poverty.

More than 80 per cent of the population are Muslim. Islamic teaching allows the death penalty, but stresses mercy and compassion.

Join the Malaysian caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



ISRAEL

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES ISRAEL



Your country is:

Abolitionist for ordinary crimes only.

The death penalty is only carried out in your country in extreme circumstances, for convictions for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes against the Jewish people and treason in war time. Only one person has been civilly executed in the history of Israel – Nazi mass murderer Adolf Eichman who was hanged in 1962.

Country information

The Israeli state is situated in the Middle East and has a population of 7.2 million people.

Your position in the debate

Israel's rare use of the death penalty is highly influenced by the Jewish faith. Under Jewish law in the Talmud in ancient times the death penalty was the punishment for 36 offences from murder and rape to idol worship and dishonouring the Sabbath day. The Talmud says: 'Whoever sheds the blood of man by man will his blood be shed, for in his image did God create man.'

However, the great Jewish teacher Moses Maimonides wrote: 'It is better and more satisfactory to acquit a thousand guilty persons than to put a single innocent one to death.'

Most Jewish scholars and religious leaders today believe that the death penalty should remain in use.

You are undecided about how to vote. Perhaps support the Italian motion. Perhaps, although Israel is effectively an abolitionist country in practice, you may decide not to vote at all.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



ITALY

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES ITALY



You have an important role to play in this debate. You have to present the European Union motion that is also supported by other member states of the UN.

Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

Italy abolished the death penalty at the end of World War II in 1947, and has become a leading nation campaigning against the use of the death penalty round the world.

Country information

Italy is a European country of 59.9 million people.

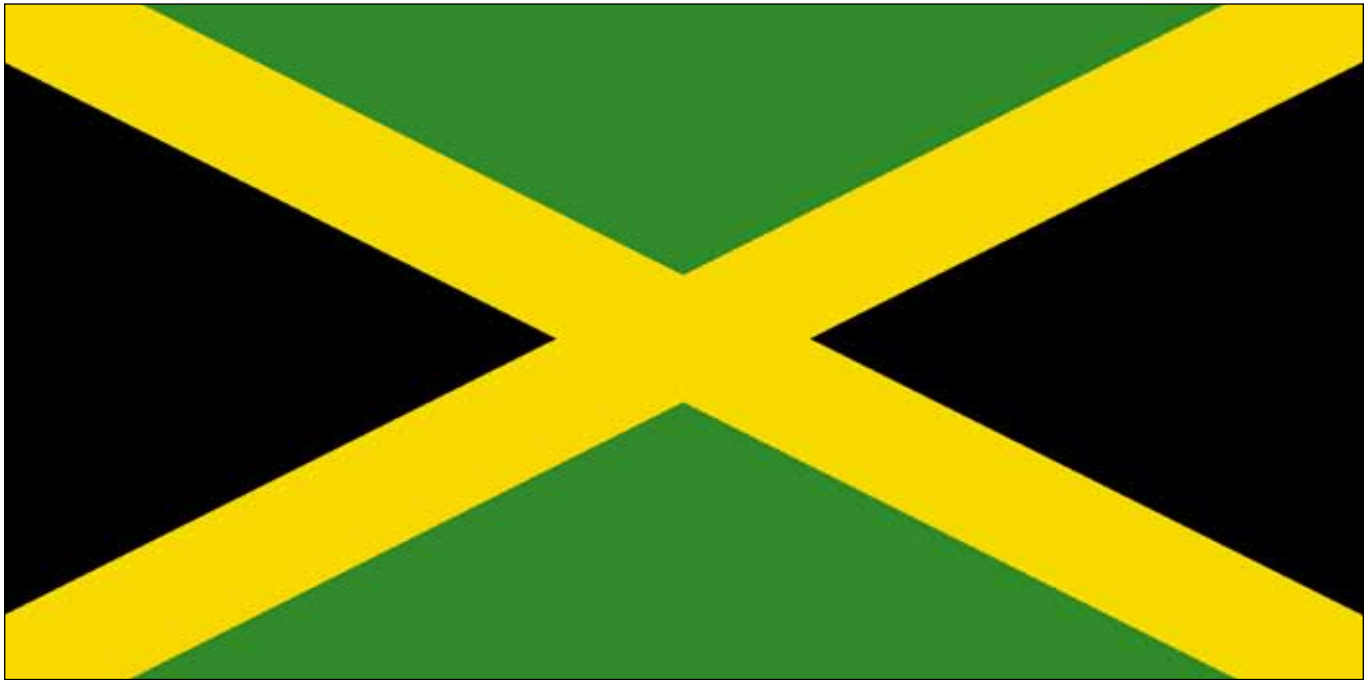
Your position in the debate

Italy is strongly against the death penalty and is working for an international ban of the practice. It proposed the UN moratorium on the Death Penalty in 2007 before the General Assembly of the United Nations, urging all countries to suspend capital punishment with a view to banning it. After the resolution's approval, Italy's foreign minister declared: 'Now we must start working on the abolition of the death penalty.'

You are to lead and organise the ambassadors of countries that support your motion, and will argue that executions, however they are carried out, are cruel, inhuman and degrading forms of punishment, whether by the hangman's rope (the most common method), the gun (China), poison gas (USA), lethal injection (USA), the sword (Saudi Arabia), stoning (Iran) or the electric chair (USA).

Ninety per cent of your nation is Catholic. You give emphasis to the Catholic teaching of the sanctity of life: that God is the Lord of life and that human life at all its stages is sacred. You argue for the unique worth and dignity of each person, as creatures made in the image and likeness of God. You also believe in stewardship, that human beings are called to care for life, not to destroy it.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



JAMAICA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES JAMAICA



Your country is:

Retentionist.

In 2009, two people were sentenced to death; there were no executions. Jamaica has effectively had a moratorium (freeze) on hanging (the method used for execution); the last execution took place in 1988. In July 2009 the Prime Minister declared that the government would honour Parliament's decision in 2008 to retain the death penalty, despite pressure to abolish it.

Country information

Jamaica is an island in the Caribbean with a population of 2.7 million people.

Your position in the debate

Although the death penalty is suspended, you now want Jamaica to reintroduce it – mainly in response to your country's frightening murder rate and an increase in violence against children. In 2009, gang violence reportedly resulted in 1,198 deaths between January and September.

Argue that the death penalty is the only effective way to stop this crime wave.

Jamaica is a largely Christian country. You argue that anyone who takes away a sacred human life should also have their life taken away, and it is reassuring that no executed person will ever kill again.

Join the Malaysians in the caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



LEBANON

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES LEBANON



Your country is:

Retentionist.

Lebanon still retains capital punishment in law, and at least 41 people were under sentence of death at the end of 2009. However, the last executions were carried out in 2004. In 2008 the Minister of Justice proposed a draft law to abolish the death penalty, but it had not yet been approved by the end of 2009.

Country information

Lebanon is a small country in the Middle East with 4.2 million people.

Your position in the debate

Perhaps it is now time for Lebanon to take the plunge and abolish the death penalty forever – or perhaps not. In 2008, the Minister of Justice said, ‘Science has proven that there is no casual relationship between crime and the presence or absence of the death penalty.’

However, some Lebanese officials continue to advocate the death penalty, arguing it keeps law-abiding people

safe. It is applied to those convicted of spying for Israel, high treason, premeditated murder, or acts of ‘terrorism’ that endanger state security.

Listen carefully to the debate. Find out what some of the other countries in the Middle East are going to do. Perhaps have a word with the delegates from Algeria and Azerbaijan. Perhaps you will vote for a moratorium and support the Italian motion. Perhaps you will vote against it. Perhaps you will abstain and not cast your vote at all.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country’s position.



MALAWI

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES **MALAWI**



Your country is:

Abolitionist in practice.

In April 2007 the High Court ruled death sentences on all prisoners on death row unconstitutional. The Court found that the death penalty violated the right to life and amounted to inhuman punishment. As a result the 23 prisoners on death row were resentenced. The last execution took place in 1992.

Country information

Malawi is in South-East Africa with a population of 15.3 million.

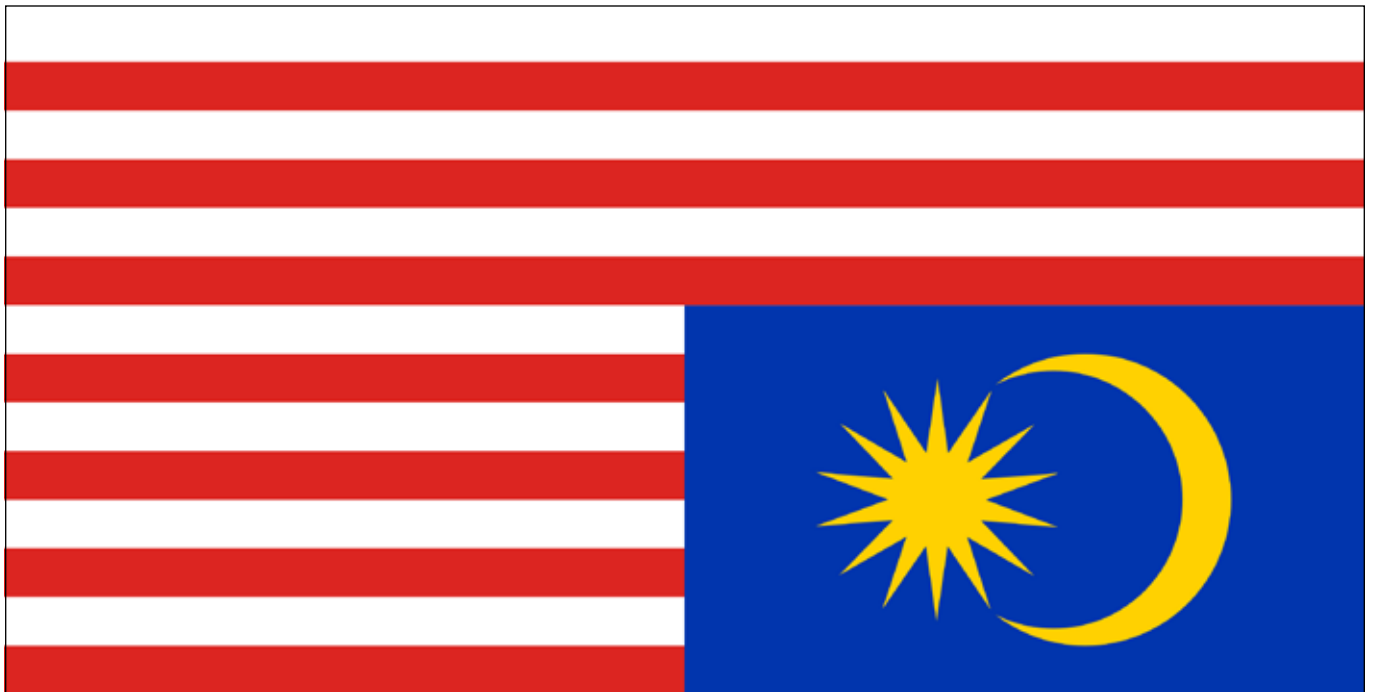
Your position in the debate

Public opinion on the death penalty in Malawi is divided. Some fear abolishing it would give rise to serious criminal offences. Others argue that the death penalty does not deter people from committing serious crimes so what is the purpose of maintaining it? There are other alternatives, including life imprisonment.

Most of Malawi's citizens are Christian. The President, Bingu wa Mutharika, is also a Christian. He is against the death penalty. In the past he has commuted capital sentences to life imprisonment, including for three politicians who were plotting to assassinate him.

You are undecided about how to vote. Possibly abstain from voting. Talk with fellow Africans, South Africa and Angola, before making your mind up.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



MALAYSIA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES MALAYSIA



You have an important job to play in this activity. You are to lead and organise the ambassadors of countries that, like yours, are against Italy's motion.

Your country is:

Retentionist.

At least 68 people were sentenced to death by the High Courts in 2009 while the number of executions was unknown. Crimes carrying the death penalty include drug trafficking, murder and terrorism.

Country information

You are a prosperous country in South East Asia with a population of 27.5 million.

Your position in the debate

The Malaysian government is strongly in favour of the death penalty. Indeed, people are constantly exhorting that its use should be extended, saying that it is the appropriate punishment for even more crimes. Argue that potential criminals will think twice before breaking the law for fear of losing their life. The taking of a criminal's life allows society

to show that certain crimes will not be tolerated. Moreover, once a convicted criminal is executed, you don't have to worry about them escaping or repeating their crime. You might point out it costs more money to keep murderers in prison serving a life sentence than it does to execute them.

Malaysians are mostly Muslims. Islam is a religion in which life is sacred. However, Islamic law allows execution for intentional murder and Fasad fil-ardh (spreading mischief in the land).

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



MEXICO

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES **MEXICO**



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

Mexico abolished the death penalty in 2005, and has long been a powerful voice in international forums calling for the abolition of capital punishment. The last execution was carried out in 1961.

Country information

Mexico is in Central America and has a population of 109.6 million.

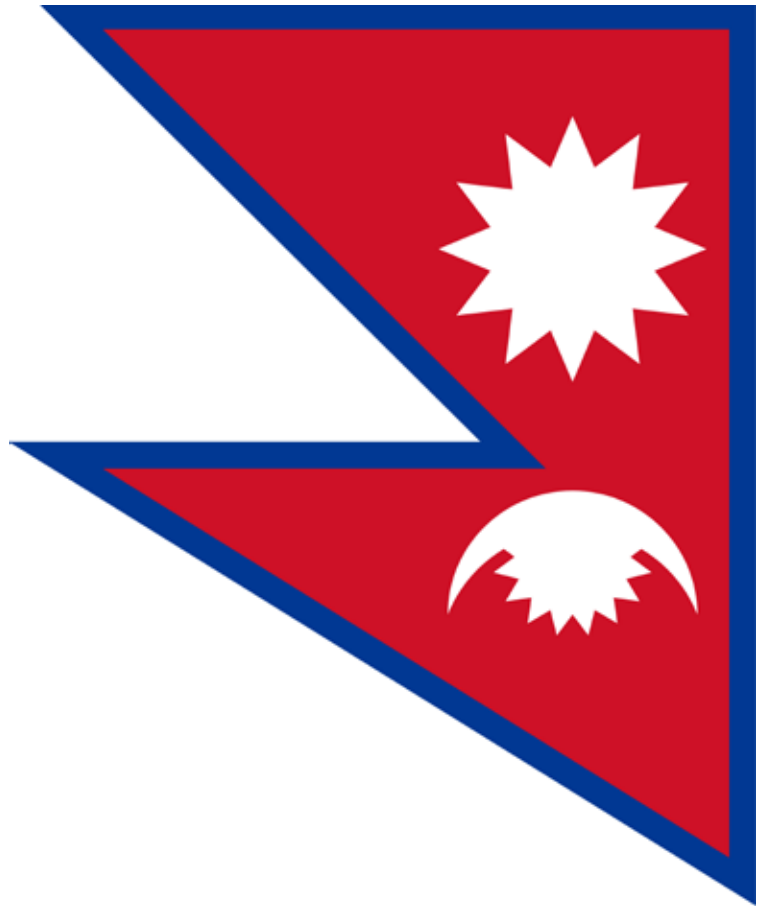
Your position in the debate

A wave of crime and drug-related violence has reignited the debate on the death penalty in your country. In 2009, huge posters in Mexico City carrying the Green Party logo demanded its return. The poster slogan read: 'Because we care about your life – the death penalty for murderers and kidnappers'. However it is unlikely, if not impossible, that it will be reinstated. The government, church and human rights groups all strongly oppose it.

Argue that the death penalty is discriminatory, ie it is used against the poor people and members of racial, ethnic and religious minority communities. Capital punishment in the USA (and in many other countries) means 'those who ain't got the capital get the punishment'. Statistics show that prisoners on death row and those who get executed across the world from the USA to Malaysia tend to be the poor, the mentally ill and members of ethnic minorities. The prisoners who are executed are not necessarily those who committed the worst crimes, but often those who were too poor to hire skilled lawyers to defend them.

Join the Italian caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



NEPAL

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES NEPAL



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

Nepal reintroduced the death penalty in the 1980s and then abolished it for ordinary crimes (peacetime offences) in 1990 and for all crimes in 1997.

Country information

Nepal is a mountainous country in Asia with a population of 29.3 million people.

Your position in the debate

Most Nepali people are Hindus and there is also a large Buddhist minority. You might refer to the important Buddhist and Hindu concept of ahimsa – non-violence and respect for life. This important teaching gives you reason to be completely against the use of the death penalty in all cases.

Nepal is emerging from a decade of armed conflict and political violence. In your speech you might make the point that the death penalty simply doesn't work against terrorism. Terrorists are willing to die for their ideas.

Executing convicted terrorists would only make things worse. Execution simply turns the terrorist into the martyr.

Join the Italian caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



POLAND

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES **POLAND**



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

Poland was a Communist country for many years until 1989. Under communism an average of 10 people were sentenced to death each year between 1956 and 1988, mostly for murder. But a moratorium (freeze) on executions began in 1989 and capital punishment was abolished for all crimes in 1997. A new era began when Poland joined the European Union in 2004.

Country information

Poland is a country in Eastern Europe with a population of 38.1 million people.

Your position in the debate

Poland has signed Protocol 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which restricts the application of the death penalty to times of war. Poland has signed, but not yet ratified (confirmed it will abide by), Protocol 13 of the Convention, which calls for the total abolition of the death penalty.

The late President Kaczyński said that abolishing the death penalty gives criminals advantages over victims, clashing with the European Union over the issue. However, you remain an opponent of capital punishment. Argue that execution does not work as a deterrent to crime (ie the fear of being caught and executed does not stop murderers from murdering people).

Ninety-five per cent of Polish people are Catholics. You could argue that state executions just continue the cycle of violence, and fail to promote Jesus' teaching of agape (unconditional love). You could also argue that the idea of killing someone because they killed someone in order to show that killing people is wrong makes no sense at all.

Join the Italian caucus.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



SINGAPORE

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES SINGAPORE



Your country is:

Retentionist.

Capital punishment is by hanging in Singapore. Information about death sentences and executions is very limited. At least one person was executed in 2009 and at least six were known to have been sentenced to death. The actual number of executions and death sentences is believed to be much higher.

Country information

Singapore is a small island state in South East Asia with a population of 4.7 million people.

Your position in the debate

You might argue that Singapore is one of the safest places in the world thanks to the death penalty. The government states that it is only used in the most serious of crimes, sending a strong message to would-be offenders. It really annoys you that Western countries try to tell the people of Asia what to do and attempt to interfere in your internal affairs. Each country has the right to decide on its own judicial system, taking into account its own circumstances.

Nearly half of Singapore's people are Buddhists. You could point out that the Buddhist 'Bodhicaryavatara' authorises violence if it is necessary to prevent suffering (ie if it acts as a deterrent, putting other people off committing serious crimes). You could say that the death penalty is needed to stamp out the crime of drug peddling that ruins thousands of people's lives.

Join the Malaysian caucus. See if you can persuade other Asian nations like India to join you.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



SOUTH AFRICA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES SOUTH AFRICA



Your country is:

Abolitionist for all crimes.

South Africa used to be one of the world's leading executing nations before Nelson Mandela became President in 1994 and South Africa abolished the death penalty for all crimes in 1997.

Country information

South Africa has a population of 50.1 million people.

Your position in the debate

With increasing crime rates, support has grown for reinstating capital punishment. In 2008, Jacob Zuma, now the President of South Africa, said he would re-open the debate on capital punishment. However, he came under fire from human rights organisations and the debate has not been reopened.

South Africa is a state party to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which aims to abolish the death penalty globally; re-introducing the death penalty would greatly damage

its international reputation. Say that South Africa's brutal apartheid history shows that too often innocent people can be executed by the state.

Eighty per cent of South Africans are Christians – mostly Protestants. You might quote Archbishop Desmond Tutu who said: 'To a Christian whose belief system is rooted in forgiveness, the death penalty is unacceptable... Retribution, resentment and revenge leave us with a world soaked in the blood of far too many of our brothers and sisters. The death penalty is part of that process.'

You might argue that executions brutalise those involved in the process and the society that carries them out. It is an irrevocable punishment, resulting inevitably in the execution of people innocent of any crime.

Join the Italian caucus. See if you can persuade the Malawian ambassador to join you.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



SUDAN

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES **SUDAN**



Your country is:

Retentionist.

Sudan carries out the highest number of executions in Africa. Between July 2008 and June 2009, 103 people were sentenced to death by special counter-terrorism courts. In addition, at least six people were sentenced to death by ordinary courts and nine were executed. Capital punishment is by hanging, shooting or stoning to death.

Country information

Sudan is in the north east of Africa and has a population of 42.2 million.

Your position in the debate

Sudan's people are mainly Muslim, about 10 per cent are Christian and the rest are mostly animist in their beliefs (meaning they have a profound respect for life). You might point out that most Sudanese strongly support the arguments in the Holy Qur'an in favour of executions.

Argue that in your country executions are needed to stop the crime wave and terrorism. Society must protect

individuals, even if this means one must die to protect others. It is the proper punishment for such crimes as murder, cursing God, smuggling, drug trafficking, adultery, war against the state, stealing camels and rape.

Join the Malaysian caucus. Try to work alongside the Chinese, Americans and Cubans to defeat the motion. See if you can persuade other Muslim countries to join you.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.



USA

AMBASSADOR BRIEFING NOTES USA



Your country is:

Retentionist.

In the USA, states are free to decide on the use of the death penalty: 35 of 50 use the death penalty and 15 do not. Fifty-two people were executed during 2009 (the highest total for three years) bringing to 1,188 the total number of prisoners executed since the US Supreme Court lifted a moratorium on the death penalty in 1976 and allowed executions to resume in January 1977. A minority of US states continue to account for the majority of executions: Texas executed 24 people during 2009. That same year, New Mexico became the 15th state to outlaw the death penalty.

Country information

The USA in North America has a population of 314.7 million.

Your position in the debate

Despite the USA showing some signs of turning against the death penalty, more states are in support of the practice than not.

Many Americans are church-going Christian people, strongly in favour of the death penalty for murder. You might quote the arguments in the Bible in favour of executions: Those who kill must be killed.

'Whoever sheds men's blood, by man his blood shall be shed.' (Genesis 9:6).

Argue that the alternative, 'life imprisonment', does not always mean life and the criminal is released and free to offend again.

Join Malaysia in the caucus. Side with anyone who supports the death penalty, even if it means collaborating with China, Cuba and Sudan – countries you don't normally see eye to eye with. See what pressure you can put on the undecided ambassadors to get them to support you.

This briefing card has been developed for an educational resource to be used in the classroom. The facts about use of the death penalty are correct, but the arguments suggested may not reflect accurately the country's position.

LESSON 2

THE ITALIAN MOTION

THE ITALIAN MOTION

Motion for Debate in the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly at the UN building in New York

‘This session of the United Nations General Assembly calls on all member states that have not yet abolished the death penalty to restrict the number of death sentences, to avoid using executions wherever possible and to consider establishing a moratorium (suspension) on all executions, with a view to their complete abolition.’

To be moved by Italy on behalf of the European Union and over 80 other UN member states.

THE ITALIAN MOTION

Motion for Debate in the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly at the UN building in New York

‘This session of the United Nations General Assembly calls on all member states that have not yet abolished the death penalty to restrict the number of death sentences, to avoid using executions wherever possible and to consider establishing a moratorium (suspension) on all executions, with a view to their complete abolition.’

To be moved by Italy on behalf of the European Union and over 80 other UN member states.



THE ITALIAN MOTION

Motion for Debate in the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly at the UN building in New York

‘This session of the United Nations General Assembly calls on all member states that have not yet abolished the death penalty to restrict the number of death sentences, to avoid using executions wherever possible and to consider establishing a moratorium (suspension) on all executions, with a view to their complete abolition.’

To be moved by Italy on behalf of the European Union and over 80 other UN member states.

THE ITALIAN MOTION

Motion for Debate in the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly at the UN building in New York

‘This session of the United Nations General Assembly calls on all member states that have not yet abolished the death penalty to restrict the number of death sentences, to avoid using executions wherever possible and to consider establishing a moratorium (suspension) on all executions, with a view to their complete abolition.’

To be moved by Italy on behalf of the European Union and over 80 other UN member states.



LESSON 2

FOR AND AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

ARGUMENTS PEOPLE USE FOR THE DEATH PENALTY

- 1 Capital punishment is the right punishment for those who take away life – murderers, terrorists and drug peddlers. Those who have taken a life should be killed – a life for a life.
- 2 Capital punishment is a deterrent. The fear of being executed must surely put off the criminals from committing murder if they know they'll face the death penalty if caught.
- 3 One thing is certain: no executed person will ever kill again.
- 4 Public opinion wants executions.
- 5 The families of those killed need justice and retribution (revenge).
- 6 It would surely cost a lot more money to keep murderers in prison serving a life sentence than it would to execute them.
- 7 It is more humane to put someone to death than to keep them locked up for years.



ARGUMENTS PEOPLE USE AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

- 1 Execution is a violation of the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 2 It is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, whether by the hangman's rope, the firing squad, poison gas, lethal injection, the sword, stoning or the electric chair.
- 3 Capital punishment does not deter crime. All studies by the UN and others show the death penalty does not prevent crime any more effectively than other punishments.
- 4 Courts can make mistakes. Innocent people are being executed. A study in 1987 showed that 350 innocent people had been condemned to death in the USA since 1900 and 23 of them were executed.
- 5 The state carrying out the death penalty makes us all into killers. If we support the death penalty for murder, we end up supporting murder, which makes us guilty of hypocrisy.
- 6 The death penalty is discriminatory and is often used disproportionately against people from poor backgrounds or of particular races, or those with mental health problems.
- 7 If someone is put to death, they have no chance to change their life or to contribute positively to society.

LESSON 2

CHAIR'S BRIEFING NOTES

The following are tips and suggestions for the teacher who is chairing the debate.

Explain to students that the information on their briefing cards is based on fact, but that some artistic licence has been used to encourage and enable debate. Ask students to try to keep the contents of their Ambassador briefing notes a secret. They should carry these briefings around with them during the caucus so they can be identified and have their national flags on display during the debate.

Remind anyone who is definitely FOR or definitely AGAINST the Motion that their side will only win if they can persuade enough of the UNDECIDEDS to vote with them, which they should do during the caucus.

All speakers should always address their remarks to the Chair.

Encourage everyone in the class to say at least one thing in the debate.

If possible speakers should use their own words rather than read directly from their Ambassador briefing notes.

Keep all the speeches down to no more than a minute or so in length.

Everyone gets just one chance to speak, apart from the Italian ambassador, who i) proposes their motion and ii) sums up at the end.

Vary the speakers in the debate, calling on an Ambassador likely to speak FOR the motion, then one who is likely to speak AGAINST and then perhaps one of the UNDECIDED.

Encourage students to put themselves into the shoes of their Ambassador for this exercise, making their arguments as convincing as they can and presenting their ideas with some

passion (whether they personally agree with this position or not).

Ask all speakers to include:

- the arguments suggested in their Ambassador briefing notes;
- an article from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see summary version);
- a relevant point from the FOR or AGAINST arguments worksheet.

While conducting the event you may find it useful to come in and out of role to comment on arguments being put forward and lines and tactics being used during the debate.

BACKGROUND TO THIS MODEL UN DEBATE

The UN General Assembly in 2007 and 2008 called for a global moratorium on the death penalty as a first step to total abolition. In 2007 the resolution was adopted by 104 UN member states in favour, 54 against and 29 abstentions. In 2008, support had increased: 106 states voted in favour, 46 against and 34 abstained. Amnesty International hopes and believes that the UN General Assembly resolutions – the first of their kind – will continue to be a major influence in persuading countries to abandon their use of capital punishment. The resolution is not legally binding but it is morally persuasive. A similar resolution will be considered by the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in October 2010. This lesson is loosely based on this planned debate.

See further information on page 17 of the booklet.

LESSON 2

GLOSSARY

ABOLISH

To put an end to something.

ABOLITION

Being abolished.

ABOLITIONIST

A person who favours the abolition of a law that they believe to be harmful to society.

ABSTAIN

To refrain from casting one's vote.

AMBASSADOR

The highest ranking diplomat who represents their country. UN Ambassadors serve as the official representative of their country in UN debates.

CAUCUS

A preliminary meeting or discussion.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

The death penalty; punishment by death for crime.

DETERRENT

Something that deters (puts people off) doing something.

MORATORIUM

The suspension of an activity (eg a 'moratorium on the death penalty' is the suspension of the use of the death penalty).

MOTION

A proposal formally made to a deliberative assembly/decision making body.

PREMEDITATED

Done deliberately; planned.

UNITED NATIONS

An organisation that was founded in 1945, with the aim to facilitate worldwide cooperation in international law, international security, economic development, social progress and human rights issues. There are currently 192 member states (countries) including nearly every recognised independent state in the world.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

A statement adopted by the General Assembly of the UN in 1948. The declaration aims to contribute to 'freedom, justice and peace in the world' to be achieved by recognition of and respect for human rights. These rights are defined in 30 articles, which include rights such as 'the right to life' and 'the right to freedom from torture'.



UN FLAG

LESSON 2
UN FLAG

LESSON 2

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS SUMMARY VERSION



- 1 We are all born free and equal. We all have our own thoughts and ideas. We should all be treated in the same way.
- 2 These rights belong to everybody, whatever our differences.
- 3 We all have the right to life, and to live in freedom and safety.
- 4 Nobody has any right to make us a slave. We cannot make anyone else our slave.
- 5 Nobody has any right to hurt or torture us or treat us cruelly.
- 6 Everyone has the right to be protected by the law.
- 7 The law is the same for everyone. It must treat us all fairly.
- 8 We can all ask for the law to help us when we are not treated fairly.
- 9 Nobody has the right to put us in prison without a good reason, to keep us there or to send us away from our country.
- 10 If we are put on trial, this should be in public. The people who try us should not let anyone tell them what to do.
- 11 Nobody should be blamed for doing something until it has been proved. When people say we did a bad thing we have the right to show it is not true.
- 12 Nobody should try to harm our good name. Nobody has the right to come into our home, open our letters, or bother us, or our family, without a good reason.
- 13 We all have the right to go where we want to in our own country and to travel abroad as we wish.
- 14 If we are frightened of being badly treated in our own country, we all have the right to run away to another country to be safe.
- 15 We all have the right to belong to a country.
- 16 Every grown up has the right to marry and have a family if they want to. Men and women have the same rights when they are married, and when they are separated.
- 17 Everyone has the right to own things or share them. Nobody should take our things from us without a good reason.
- 18 We all have the right to believe in what we want to believe, to have a religion, or to change it if we wish.
- 19 We all have the right to make up our own minds, to think what we like, to say what we think, and to share our ideas with other people.
- 20 We all have the right to meet our friends and to work together in peace to defend our rights. Nobody can make us join a group if we don't want to.
- 21 We all have the right to take part in the government of our country. Every grown up should be allowed to vote to choose their own leaders.
- 22 We all have the right to a home, enough money to live on and medical help if we are ill. Music, art, craft and sport are for everyone to enjoy.
- 23 Every grown up has the right to a job, to a fair wage for their work, and to join a trade union.
- 24 We all have the right to rest from work and relax.
- 25 We all have the right to enough food, clothing, housing and health care. Mothers and children and people who are old, unemployed or disabled have the right to be cared for.
- 26 We all have the right to education, and to finish primary school, which should be free. We should be able learn a career, or to make use of all our skills.
- 27 We all have the right to our own way of life, and to enjoy the good things that science and learning bring.
- 28 There must be proper order so we can all enjoy rights and freedoms in our own country and all over the world.
- 29 We have a duty to other people, and we should protect their rights and freedoms.
- 30 Nobody can take away these rights and freedoms from us.

This is a simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from Amnesty International UK. For the full version of the Declaration see www.un.org/en/documents/index.shtml