

DEATH PENALTY – JUSTICE OR REVENGE?

Jesus Christ. Jeanne d'Arc. Anne Boleyn. We all know these names: they all were condemned to death. The world's history is rich in the examples of such kind of savageness. The death penalty has its roots deep down in prehistoric times. Millions and millions have been severely killed since those days, with lots of innocent people among them. Is it fair or immoral? My task is to study the problem, find out pros and cons, and propose some vital answers. I promise to be as much objective as it needs. My investigation consists of four parts; I called them "Sources", "Map & Numbers", "Motherland", and "VoxPopuli". Let's stop at each.

If you turn to such a world-wide known works of literature as the Bible, you'll see that it contains references to capital punishment. In the Bible, the death penalty is regarded as the corporal punishment for grave crimes: violation of Shabbat holiness (the seventh day of the Jewish week and the Jewish day of rest), blasphemy, murder, adultery (breach of faith), homosexuality, bestiality, sexual assault, insult to parents or slaughter of them, and kidnapping. In the capacity of punishment – pelting to death with stones, burning at the stake, and hanging. Almost the same in other world religions. Throughout the history people have been adapting the scripts as they like, according to their morals and intentions. Trying to keep the balance and obtain justice they fairly often behave not like human beings but like beasts: that savage, furious, bloodthirsty. You see, from the time of the Colosseum nothing has been changed. People have absolutely forgotten the lines on Moses's board: "Don't kill."

However, we are getting closer to a death penalty - free world. Of 198 countries only 20 carried out executions in 2011. That's a steep decline compared to a decade ago. Despite this trend a small group of countries keep executing at an alarming rate. Here are the highest executioners: China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the USA. As to the Middle East, confirmed executions increased by 50% from 2010. By the way, the USA is the only country in Group of Eight to carry out executions in

2011. About 18,750 people are on a death row, 676 executed worldwide in 2011. And these numbers don't include China. The People's Republic of China still continues to execute more people than the rest of the world put together. Still progress was made. In Japan for the first time in 19 years no executions were recorded. A decrease in the use of death penalty was also recorded in Tunisia, the USA, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Authority.

Belarus is known to be the only European country that still carries out executions. Death penalty here is the punishment for about 12 violations: among them terrorism, murder of a policeman, murder of a foreigner for the purpose of unleashing war, etc. In 2005, 2 people were executed, in 2006 – 9, and in 2011 – 2. It was done by a firing squad.

I have asked 205 students in an attempt to find out what Belarusian students think of the matter. The question was whether you support the death penalty, or stand against it. The percentage of both answers are almost equal, which means that Belarusian society still is not ready to overcome the principles the USSR created in the last century. Unless people find the way to break the old prejudices, death penalty will exist in our country.

As for me, I oppose the death penalty in all cases without exception: regardless of the nature of the crime, the characteristics of the offender, or the methods of execution.

Д.В. Чемеревская, Т.С. Опанюк

УО БГЭУ (МИНСК)

THE CAUSES AND ORIGINS OF TERRORISM

Terrorism isn't just brutal, unthinking violence. Experts agree that there is almost always a strategy behind terrorist actions. Whether it takes the form of bombings, shootings, hijackings, or assassinations, terrorism is neither random, spontaneous, nor blind: it is a deliberate use of violence against civilians for political or religious ends.