

Human Rights Digest

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Introduction

The taking of human life has been strongly condemned by most world religions and philosophies over the centuries. International human rights law has in turn sought to uphold the right to life, this most

sacrosanct of rights, in a number of treaties. The life of an individual is clearly protected from being arbitrarily taken by the state.

Human Rights Digest is a free monthly publication dedicated to the promotion of human rights by empowering its readers with the requisite information that will ensure and guarantee the application of its principles in the daily lives of all Jamaican's regardless of one's social status, creed or ethnicity!

The first issue of this newsletter is issued in recognition of **WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY** commemorated worldwide on October 10th of every year

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On 10 October 2009, World Day Against the Death Penalty, the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty wishes to teach abolition to all citizens around the world.

The first World Day Against the Death Penalty took place in 2003. This event was launched by the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, which gathers international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Bar Associations, unions and local governments from all over the world. Established by organisations who participated in the first international Congress against the death penalty (Strasbourg, 2001), the Coalition aims to encourage the establishment of national coalitions,

the organisation of common initiatives and the coordination of international lobbying efforts to sensitize states that still maintain the death penalty.

The History of the Death Penalty

According to the legal codes of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) the death penalty was inflicted on the culprits indulged in practice of a different religion, pre-marital sex, homosexual behavior, engaging in prostitution, rebellion by teenagers, and blasphemy. It also served as the means by which rulers could suppress their rivals.

Capital punishments has been inflicted by stoning, the guillotine, firing squad, the use of poisonous gas, hanging, electrical chair and lethal injections.

Why we are against the death penalty

The Death Penalty is, undeniably, one of the most controversial issues of our day. Emotional tensions are high between those who hold

human life above justice and those who hold justice above all human life. The Death Penalty, along with many forms of criminal punishment, is barbaric. This form of punishment, indeed all forms of criminal justice, truly show the level to which society has sunk. When people stand outside prisons and cheer as prisoners are murdered, there is a problem. When personal bloodlust is held above moral ideologies, there is a problem. When human life is assigned a value and weighed against other alternatives, there is a problem. The state speaks of Justice, but this word is only a reflection of the confusion, anger, and hatred that has fermented within this country, indeed within the very foundations of human society itself.

Truly it can be said that the Death Penalty does nothing to address the real problems of Jamaican society. There is a large number of business people in this country who state that crime and violence is not good for business, yet such a small number of them actually come up in opposition to the Death Penalty;

oftentimes, in fact, they are its most avid supporters. How can this be? When the death penalty itself is not good for business! The carrying out of the death penalty is the murdering of human capital, human capital that all society needs in order to create wealth; wealth that Jamaica desperately needs at this point in time.

Thus we the anti-death penalty coalition suggests that a national farm should be created so that murder convicts can work to feed not only their peers but the society in general. The revenue saved from feeding prisoners can be utilized in other sectors such as education, which is a critical component in fighting crime and violence and creating an enhancing society.

Hence instead of a simple-minded solution (the death penalty) to a complex problem, let us plan our way out of complex problems by allowing human rights to be at the vanguard of our legislative policies!