

Unit 2 Handout 6

I. What are some of the punishments we've seen in class associated with crimes? Vote in Menti.

II. Match the words from the right (a-h) with their correct definitions (1-8).

TERM	DEFINITION
a. abolition _____	1. a thing that is intended to discourage someone from doing something.
b. enhancement _____	2. becoming annoyed or angry very easily
c. deterrent _____	3. an official order that prevents something from happening
d. unreliable _____	4. not able to be trusted or believed
e. bad-tempered _____	5. the act of ending an activity or custom officially
f. vocal _____	6. to criticize someone or something severely
g. ban _____	7. often expressing opinions and complaints in speech
h. blasted _____	8. the process of improving the quality, amount, or strength of something

III. Read an article about the death penalty. What are the main ideas?

UN calls for death penalty abolition

A United Nations committee has voted for an immediate worldwide freeze on the use of the death penalty. A total of 99 countries voted in favor of a suspension of capital punishment, while 52 opposed the proposal and the remaining 33 nations did not vote. Those who campaigned against the death penalty said the **abolition** would "contribute to the **enhancement** and progressive development of human rights." They said capital punishment has not been a **deterrent** for crimes and many innocent people are still put to death by mistake. British ambassador to the UN Sir John Sawers said the vote showed that international opinion has changed in the past decade: "We now have a global coalition and I think it's an important sign that the death penalty is increasingly unpopular and is seen as **unreliable**," he said.

The vote followed two days of heated and at times **bad-tempered** discussions. Singapore, the USA, China, Syria and Libya were among those wanting to keep the death penalty. Singapore's ambassador Vanu Gopala Menon was very **vocal** in his support of it. He was angry at the European Union because it voted for a **ban** on capital punishment. He accused the EU of improperly linking the death penalty with human rights and said it was imposing its "values" on the rest of the world. He **blasted** the EU for trying "to force through a resolution that a significant number of other countries do not agree with." He argued that countries have a "right to determine the legal measures and penalties which are appropriate for their societies, including the death penalty for the most serious crimes".

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IV. Decide if these sentences were true (T) or false (F).

- a. More than 50% of the countries from the committee voted in favor of the suspension of the Death Penalty. T / F
- b. Many countries, including Singapore, the USA, China, Syria and Libya believe the death penalty does not deter crime. T / F
- c. International opinion towards the death penalty has changed in the past years and become more unpopular than before. T / F
- d. The discussions at the UN remained, in general, good-natured and polite. T / F
- e. Singapore's ambassador, Vanu Gopala, spoke strongly in favor of abolishing the Capital Punishment. T / F
- f. Singapore's ambassador said countries are autonomous and needed to make their own decisions about the subject. T / F

V. Reflect on the following questions. You can work in pairs or individually.

- a) Do you think capital punishment is a deterrent to crime? Why (not)?

- b) What is the history of capital punishment in your country?

- c) Is it OK to have the death penalty if 0.0001% of those sentenced to death are totally innocent?

VI. Debate these arguments about the death penalty with a partner or in small groups for just 5 minutes. What is your position?

- a. All killing is wrong. Vs. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.
- b. It saves taxpayers' money. Vs. No price can be put on human life.
- c. The death penalty goes against human rights. Vs. So does multiple murder.
- d. Mistakes are made. Innocent people die. Vs. No system is perfect.
- e. It provides closure for victims' families. Vs. That's a poor reason to kill someone.
- f. Life in prison is a better option. Vs. Life in prison means life watching TV, reading and chatting.