



LANGUE VIVANTE I

Épreuve du 1^{er} groupe

A N G L A I S

Why Death Penalty Is Losing Favour in Sub-Sahara Africa

5 Death penalty is declining worldwide despite a surge in executions during the first few months of 2015 in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The African continent is a vanguard of **this trend**. Death penalty has been abolished or has fallen into disuse throughout Portuguese and French-speaking Africa. The same goes for South Africa and Namibia. Only a handful of countries regularly execute, most prominently Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, and Libya. Several verge on abolition. In 2012, the Ghanaian government endorsed a constitutional change to abolish capital punishment. Death penalty in Kenya, historically mandatory for robbery and rape, faces frequent court challenges.

10 As with most aspects of criminal justice, death penalty as it exists in law is a colonial import. Except in centralised empires, criminal justice before the modern era was a private matter in which a victim's family, clan, or kin group negotiated compensation from a perpetrator's kin under threat of spiritual harm. Law enforcement and punishment were collective and crime could result in misfortune for the group. Compensation restored the harmony of a community, a nascent concept of restorative justice that resonates today. While death penalty was known for religious reasons in Islamic-majority Africa, elsewhere the use of capital punishment was spotty. Crimes that caused spiritual harm, such as incest or adultery in some societies, often triggered the most severe sanctions. Among the Igbo peoples of Nigeria and the Maasai of Kenya, murder of a kinsman was treated more harshly than murder of an outsider. Execution rituals were intricately linked to beliefs about authority and the afterlife.

20 Attitudes toward death penalty in pre-colonial or colonial times are still relevant. The Batswana of Botswana practiced capital punishment for murder while the Shona of Zimbabwe used an intricate system of compensation for wrongs. Unlike Botswana, Zimbabwe suffered excessive political executions during the colonial period. Elsewhere, misuse of death penalty during the colonial era or in the period of one-party and military rule after independence continues to haunt. In Kenya, more than 1,000 executions of militants took place during the Mau Mau conflict in the 1950s.

25 During the Algerian War, the French government even carried out executions for sabotage and other property crimes. Newly independent governments learned these lessons all too well. The sham capital trials of environmental activist Ken Saro-Wiwa by the Nigerian military government, opposition leader Orton Chirwa in Hastings Banda's Malawi, and human rights attorney Koigi wa Wamwere in Kenya under former president, Daniel Arap Moi, are only the most well-known examples among **thousands**.

30 The question confronting political leaders of all retentionist nations is whether death penalty is worth the cost and the risk of error. But on a continent with a legacy of misuse by powerful, unchecked executives, the case against death penalty may be even more compelling. Certainly, some brutal dictatorships in the world today have abolished capital punishment, but their job is harder. Death penalty is a dramatic expression of state power. Though only a small part of the rule of law landscape, the implications of abolition for judicial independence, transparency, and trust in authority may be far-reaching

Andrew Novak,
George Mason University

I. COMPREHENSION: 08 marks

A. Complete the table below with appropriate information from the text. (01.5 marks)

Main issue raised in the text	Two types of criminality sanctioned by execution	Countries where opinion leaders have been executed
5. Death penalty	1. _____	3. _____ 4. _____
	2. _____	5. _____ 6. _____

B. Fill in the gaps in the passage below with adequate words from the paragraphs indicated. (02 marks)

African decision-makers should take into consideration the fact that death penalty used to contribute to promoting peace in traditional Africa, but not in our modern (7) _____ (parag.2). It is no longer very dissuasive. And even in some ancient African societies, criminals were condemned to pay a (8) _____ (parag.2) instead of being sentenced to death. Today, while (9) _____ (parag.3) of lawbreakers are still a reality in some countries, capital punishment is on the decrease in many others. In Senegal for instance, even before death penalty was abolished in 2004, very few (10) _____ (parag.4) had resulted in the execution of law-offenders.

C. Match each of the titles suggested below with the paragraph it summarizes best. (02 marks)

Paragraph Title	Paragraph N°
11. Reflections on Death Penalty and on its Abolition	
12. When Death Penalty Was Determined by State Rulers, Not Judges	
13. Capital Punishment Dropping throughout the World	
14. Different Crime Punishment Styles in Pre-Colonial Africa	

D. Indicate what the following words refer to in the text. (01 mark)

15. *this trend* (Line2): _____

16. *thousands* (Line 29): _____

E. Identify a text passage that is equivalent in meaning to the following situation. (01 mark)

Situation: Some rulers are wondering whether the application of capital punishment is equitable.

☞ Equivalent: 17. _____

F. Find in Paragraph 5 a word referring to “political systems in the hands of which absolute power is concentrated.” (0.5 mark)

18. _____

LANGUE VIVANTE III. LINGUISTIC and COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: 06 marks

G. Complete this passage with the right words from the options in parentheses. (01 mark)

Today our society is very different from what it used to be a few decades ago. Indeed, very young individuals now take pleasure in perpetrating monstrous acts such as mugging, rape and even murder, which are clearly (19) _____ (*against/opposing to/contrary*) the law. This situation has led more and more citizens (20) _____ (*into/among/across*) the country to call for the restoration of death penalty to dissuade such odious crimes.

H. Complete meaningfully this extract of a conversation between a religious militant and a human rights activist on death penalty. Use the prompts where given. (02.5 marks)

Militant: Let me tell you this, Sir. Unlike what you may think, I have much respect for human life and for your views on human rights. But I still believe whoever kills a person should be killed.

Activist: (21) But why _____ second chance?

Militant: This is exactly what should be avoided. The moment murderers know they'll never be sentenced to death, nothing can prevent them from (22) _____.

Activist: I beg to disagree! There are many cases of former criminals who have repented and become exemplary citizens. Just imagine if they had (23) _____ (*to deny*) that opportunity!

Militant: Those cases, my friend, are exceptions, not the rule. The large majority repeat the same crimes as soon as they walk out of prison. However, countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iran, which still execute murderers are said to be (24) _____ (*safe*) places in the Middle East.

Activist: So how come the United States and China have those very high criminality rates? There are more executions in those two countries than in the rest of the world and yet, American and Chinese citizens still kill each other very often, (25) _____?

Militant: Of course they still do. But I think those two countries are very different from ours.

I. Fill in the blanks with adequate link words from the box. (01 mark)

despite – unlike – on the contrary – however

There was a decrease in the number of countries that issued death sentences from 19 in 2013, to 18 in 2014. (26) _____, this was followed by a sharp increase in the number of executions recorded, which can be attributed to massive condemnations of organized crime gangsters in Egypt and Nigeria. (27) _____ what's happening in these two countries, death penalty is no longer applied in many parts of the world where it is simply considered archaic.

J. Use appropriate forms of the words in brackets to complete this passage. (01.5 marks)

Despite the increase of crimes in some African societies, many jurisdictions keep on pronouncing life (28) _____ (*prison*) sentences instead of death penalty. And in some cases, the condemned regret their crimes and show such a good conduct in prison that they are freed after a certain number of years and given chance to social (29) _____ (*insert*). Amnesty International considers this humanized approach to justice as more (30) _____ (*profit*) for society than eliminating people who may just have committed a huge mistake.

III. WRITING: Choose ONE topic and write about 200 words (06 marks)

Topic 1: An African Prime Minister is so concerned about the proportions of criminality in his country that he has decided to deliver a speech at the Parliament on this issue. Imagine what that speech could be and write it down.

Topic 2: A repeat offender has committed a murder again, but hasn't been arrested so far. Adama, a member of the victim's family, writes a letter of protest to the justice minister to claim for the most severe punishment. If not satisfied, he says, the family will take revenge on the criminal.