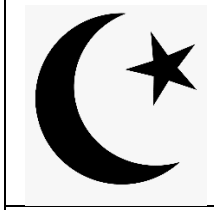
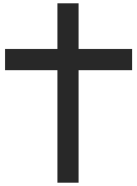
Does the death penalty guarantee justice? Knowledge organiser

Key definitions

Capital punishment/the death penalty- punishing someone by killing them
Justice- fair behaviour or treatment
Forgiveness- the action of being forgiven/acknowledging and accepting someone's wrong doing





Why do some people object to the continued use of the death penalty?

- Doesn't always work as a deterrent, many US states have the death penalty but a high murder rates
- There is the possibility that innocent people wrongly accused of serious crimes could be killed.
- The death penalty does not allow for criminals to reform
- People who do reform can then make a major contribution to the reform of others.
- Many argue that the death penalty is inhumane and makes the justice system no better than criminals who murder people

Why does society punish criminals?

Deterrence: to put people off committing a crime again. An outward sign to others.
Protection: to stop criminals from harming society.
Retribution: to take revenge on the offender, to 'get your own back'.
Reform: to give the criminal opportunity to change their ways and to be a better person upon release.

How do Christians view the death penalty?

- 10 Commandments state that 'thou shalt not kill',
- Many Christians disagree with the death penalty because of sanctity of life.
- Christians believe in forgiveness, atonement & repentance encourages other sentences
- Death penalty does not allow a criminal to reform (change) & be forgiven
- Some Christians will support the death penalty citing the old Testament quotation "An eye for and eye, a life for a life"

Why is the death penalty used in some countries?

- Deters people from serious crimes: Saudi Arabia has capital punishment & has a low crime rate.
- Gives justice & closure to the family or a murdered person.
- Protects society from the most dangerous criminals.
- Cheaper than keeping someone in prison (in theory but perhaps not always in practice)
- (Islam) Shari'ah law allows for the death penalty for murder, adultery & denying Allah.

How do Muslims view the death penalty?

- "The greatest sin is to take another man's life" this could be used to support the death penalty but also to rule it out
- Although the death penalty is permitted under certain circumstances by Shari'ah law
- The circumstances where this is allowed are in cases of intentional murder, and *Fasad fil-ardh* (anyone threatening to destabilise the state)
- Ultimately actions in this life are to be judged by Allah, who is merciful (forgiving). This could lead to some Muslims being against the death penalty.