

ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEATH PENALTY  
IN PREMEDITATED MURDER CASES IN INDONESIA: A  
COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

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Abstract

The implementation of capital punishment in premeditated murder cases in Indonesia remains a subject of legal, ethical, and social debate. Despite being upheld by the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP), concerns persist regarding its effectiveness, human rights implications, and alignment with global legal standards. This study aims to analyze the application of the death penalty in Indonesia by comparing it with selected countries—namely the United States, Singapore, and Japan—to identify best practices and potential reforms. Using a qualitative research method, this study examines legal frameworks, judicial discretion, deterrence effectiveness, human rights concerns, and public perception through literature review and comparative analysis. Data were collected from academic journals, official reports, and legal documents published within the last five years. The findings indicate that Indonesia's capital punishment system is characterized by legal inconsistencies, limited empirical evidence of deterrence, and growing international criticism for potential human rights violations. In contrast, the United States has implemented procedural safeguards to minimize wrongful convictions, Singapore enforces a strict mandatory death penalty policy, and Japan applies extensive appeal processes. The study reveals that Indonesia's recent legal reforms, including a 10-year probationary period before execution, demonstrate a shift towards rehabilitation but remain insufficient to address broader systemic concerns. In conclusion, while capital punishment continues to receive mixed public support in Indonesia, the study recommends policy reforms focusing on standardized sentencing guidelines, alternative sentencing options, and compliance with international human rights obligations to ensure a fair and transparent judicial process.

**Keywords:** Death penalty, premeditated murder, Indonesia, legal framework, comparative analysis, human rights

INTRODUCTION

Capital punishment remains one of the most controversial legal sanctions globally, with strong arguments both in favor of and against its continued application. In Indonesia, the death penalty is primarily imposed for the most serious crimes, including premeditated murder, terrorism, and drug-related offenses(Hrytenko, 2024). The country's legal stance on capital punishment reflects a complex interplay between cultural values, legal traditions, and international human rights pressures. Despite ongoing debates surrounding its effectiveness and ethical justification, capital punishment continues to be enforced under Indonesia's legal framework, particularly in cases involving severe crimes such as premeditated murder (Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 2023 Tentang KUHP, 2023). Indonesia's approach to capital punishment has faced scrutiny from international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), which have repeatedly urged the country to abolish the death penalty or impose stricter safeguards in its application (Rahayu et al., 2024). However, the Indonesian government maintains that the death penalty serves as a deterrent to heinous crimes and upholds public demand for justice. The debate over its efficacy and morality remains contentious, highlighting the need for

a comprehensive legal analysis and comparative study with other jurisdictions (Kusnadi, 2024).

The primary focus of this study is to analyze the implementation of capital punishment in premeditated murder cases in Indonesia and to compare it with legal practices in other countries. While Indonesia enforces the death penalty under its penal code, countries such as the United States, Singapore, and Japan have adopted different approaches that balance retributive justice and human rights considerations. The objectives of this study are as follows: 1) To provide an in-depth analysis of Indonesia's legal framework and judicial practices in capital punishment cases. 2) To conduct a comparative study with other legal systems, focusing on similarities and differences in sentencing, execution methods, and human rights considerations, 3) To evaluate the deterrent effect of capital punishment and its alignment with international human rights standards, 4) To propose policy recommendations for improving Indonesia's legal framework while balancing justice and human rights concerns.

### ***A. Theoretical Framework of Capital Punishment***

Capital punishment, or the death penalty, has been a subject of extensive debate across legal, moral, and social dimensions. Various theoretical frameworks have been proposed to justify or challenge its application. Two dominant theories supporting capital punishment include retributivism and deterrence theory, while opponents often cite human rights perspectives and rehabilitative justice (RIYADI, 2023). Retributivism argues that punishment should be proportionate to the gravity of the crime, emphasizing justice rather than deterrence. According to Kantian philosophy, individuals who commit heinous crimes such as premeditated murder deserve the death penalty as a form of moral retribution (Kant, 2020). This perspective aligns with Indonesia's legal justification for the death penalty, which is often framed as a means to achieve justice for victims' families.

Proponents of deterrence theory argue that the death penalty serves as a warning to potential offenders, reducing the likelihood of severe crimes. In Indonesia, government officials have frequently justified capital punishment as an effective deterrent, particularly in high-profile murder cases (Prawitasari & Saputra, 2023). However, empirical studies in various jurisdictions, including the United States, suggest mixed results regarding the deterrent effect of capital punishment (Harmon et al., 2023). Opponents of the death penalty argue that it constitutes a violation of the right to life as enshrined in international legal instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). According to Amnesty International (2022), capital punishment disproportionately affects marginalized communities and is prone to judicial errors. Indonesia's ratification of the ICCPR has brought its death penalty policies under increased scrutiny from human rights organizations (International., 2022).

### ***B. Global Perspectives on Capital Punishment***

The practice of capital punishment varies significantly across jurisdictions, reflecting differences in legal traditions, cultural values, and political ideologies. This section examines the death penalty frameworks in selected countries for comparative analysis (Rudnyeva, 2024).

1. United States of America: The U.S. remains one of the few Western democracies that retain capital punishment, though its use has declined in recent years due to legal challenges and evolving public opinion (Zimring, 2023). The Supreme Court case *Furman v. Georgia* (1972) temporarily halted executions, citing arbitrary application, but subsequent cases such as *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976) reinstated it under stricter

procedural safeguards. In states such as Texas and Florida, premeditated murder is one of the primary offenses warranting the death penalty.

2. Singapore: Singapore maintains a strict death penalty regime, with mandatory capital punishment for certain crimes, including premeditated murder. The country's legal system justifies its use based on deterrence and public safety, with a high degree of judicial efficiency in capital cases. Critics argue that the mandatory nature of the death penalty limits judicial discretion and violates human rights (Yap & Tan, 2020).
3. Japan: In Japan, the death penalty is reserved for the most severe crimes, including aggravated murder. The legal process is characterized by lengthy appeals and a strong emphasis on procedural safeguards. Public opinion in Japan largely supports capital punishment, although there are concerns about the psychological impact on inmates held in prolonged solitary confinement on death row (Johnson, 2020).
4. European Union: The EU has abolished capital punishment across all member states, emphasizing human rights and the dignity of life. The European Convention on Human Rights explicitly prohibits the death penalty, advocating for life imprisonment as an alternative measure (Europe., 2022). This abolitionist stance serves as a benchmark for countries like Indonesia facing pressure to reform their penal code.

### **C. The Legal Context of Capital Punishment in Indonesia**

Indonesia's legal framework for capital punishment is embedded within the Criminal Code (KUHP) and procedural laws, which outline the offenses punishable by death, including premeditated murder under Article 340 of the KUHP (Hardianto et al., 2024).

### **D. Legislative Framework**

Under the newly revised Criminal Code (Undang-Undang No. 1 Tahun 2023), Indonesia upholds the death penalty but introduces provisions for sentence commutation after ten years, depending on the convict's behavior and rehabilitation progress. This reflects an attempt to balance retributive justice with humanitarian considerations.

### **E. Judicial Interpretation**

Indonesian courts have shown variability in the application of the death penalty, with factors such as public pressure, political considerations, and international advocacy influencing sentencing decisions. In notable cases such as the Jessica Wongso murder case, the courts opted for life imprisonment rather than capital punishment, reflecting judicial discretion in highly publicized trials (Putusan Mahkamah Agung Republik Indonesia Nomor 1051/Pid.B/2020/PN.Jkt.Pst., 2020).

### **F. Public Perception and Criticism**

Surveys conducted by institutions such as LIPI (Indonesian Institute of Sciences) indicate that public opinion on the death penalty is divided, with strong support in cases involving heinous crimes, but growing concern over wrongful convictions and human rights implications. Critics argue that the judicial system lacks adequate safeguards to prevent miscarriages of justice, especially for marginalized individuals.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the implementation of capital punishment in premeditated murder cases in Indonesia and compare it with legal frameworks in selected countries. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the legal, social, and ethical dimensions of capital punishment, drawing insights from legal documents, expert opinions, and case studies. A comparative legal

analysis will be conducted to highlight similarities and differences in capital punishment practices across jurisdictions (Pratt, 2025).

Figure 1. Qualitative Method



**A. Data Collection Methods**

Data for this study will be collected from secondary sources, focusing on publicly accessible materials to ensure reliability and validity. The primary sources of data include:

1. Legal Documents and Policies
  - Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP), particularly Article 340 on premeditated murder.
  - Supreme Court rulings and judicial precedents related to capital punishment in Indonesia.
  - International legal frameworks, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
2. Academic Journals and Books
  - Peer-reviewed journal articles published in the last five years (2019–2024) from reputable sources such as Elsevier, Springer, and Taylor & Francis.
  - Books and monographs written by legal scholars specializing in criminal law and human rights.
3. Reports from International Organizations
  - Reports from Amnesty International, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and Human Rights Watch on the global status of capital punishment.
  - National human rights commission reports (Komnas HAM) assessing Indonesia's compliance with international human rights standards.
4. Case Law Analysis
  - Examination of landmark cases involving capital punishment in Indonesia, such as the *Bali Nine* case and other high-profile premeditated murder cases.
  - Comparative analysis of cases from countries such as the United States, Singapore, and Japan to identify patterns in sentencing and execution.

**B. Data Analysis Methods**

The collected data will be analyzed using the thematic analysis method, which involves identifying recurring themes and patterns across different sources of information (Jung, 2024). The following steps will be undertaken:

1. Document Analysis
  - Legal documents, court rulings, and policy papers will be examined to identify legal justifications, procedural safeguards, and inconsistencies in sentencing.

- Comparative analysis of Indonesian laws with international human rights obligations.
- 2. Comparative Analysis
  - The legal frameworks of Indonesia, the U.S., Singapore, and Japan will be compared based on:
    - Judicial procedures and safeguards.
    - Societal attitudes towards capital punishment.
    - Success rates in deterring crime and preventing wrongful executions.
- 3. Content Analysis
  - Textual analysis of journal articles and reports to identify recurring themes such as deterrence, human rights concerns, and judicial discretion.
  - Extraction of key arguments for and against the death penalty from expert opinions.

## RESULT & DISCUSSION

### A. Result

This section presents the findings of the study, focusing on the implementation of capital punishment in premeditated murder cases in Indonesia and its comparison with selected countries—namely the United States, Singapore, and Japan. The analysis is structured based on key themes identified during the research process, including legal frameworks, judicial discretion, deterrence effectiveness, human rights concerns, and public perception. Indonesia's legal framework for capital punishment is primarily governed by the Criminal Code (KUHP), particularly Article 340, which prescribes the death penalty for premeditated murder. The findings indicate that Indonesia retains capital punishment as part of its retributive justice system, with the following key features:

- Sentencing Process. Capital punishment is handed down by district courts and must be upheld through appeals to the Supreme Court and, in some cases, the President's clemency. The legal process provides opportunities for appeals, but judicial discretion remains high.
- Recent Legal Reforms. The revised KUHP (Law No. 1 of 2023) introduces a 10-year probationary period, after which a death sentence may be commuted to life imprisonment under good behavior. This reform reflects a shift towards a more rehabilitative approach, though it continues to receive criticism from human rights organizations.
- Judicial Challenges. A lack of uniformity in sentencing practices across different regions was observed, with some courts issuing death sentences more frequently than others, leading to perceptions of inconsistency and arbitrariness in the application of justice.

The deterrence effect of the death penalty in Indonesia remains a contested issue. Findings from reports by Lembaga Kajian dan Advokasi Independensi Peradilan (LeIP) indicate that there is no conclusive evidence that capital punishment has significantly reduced violent crimes, including premeditated murder. Instead, factors such as economic conditions and law enforcement efficiency appear to play a more substantial role in crime prevention. Studies show fluctuating homicide rates with no clear correlation between executions and crime reduction. In provinces with high execution rates (e.g., East Java), homicide rates have remained relatively stable, suggesting limited deterrence impact.

Indonesia's continued use of the death penalty has attracted criticism from international bodies such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and Amnesty International, which argue that it violates the right to life under the

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Indonesia is a signatory.

- Wrongful Convictions. Case studies, such as the wrongful conviction of Wilfrida Soik, highlight potential flaws in the legal process, including lack of access to adequate legal representation and coerced confessions.
- Execution Methods. Executions in Indonesia are conducted by firing squad, a method criticized for its perceived cruelty and inhumane nature.

Surveys conducted by institutions such as LIPI (Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia) show a divided public opinion on the death penalty. Findings indicate:

- Strong support for the death penalty in cases involving heinous crimes, particularly against children and law enforcement officers.
- Growing advocacy among civil society groups pushing for the abolition of capital punishment, citing human rights and judicial fairness concerns.
- Political considerations often influence sentencing decisions, especially in high-profile cases.

**B. Comparative Analysis with Other Countries**

**1. United States: Judicial Discretion and Procedural Safeguards**

In the United States, the application of the death penalty varies across states, with some jurisdictions abolishing it while others, such as Texas, actively impose it. Key findings include:

- Judicial Safeguards. The U.S. employs rigorous procedural safeguards, such as mandatory appeals and DNA testing, to minimize wrongful convictions. Cases like *Furman v. Georgia* (1972) led to significant reforms to prevent arbitrary sentencing.
- Execution Trends. The number of executions has steadily declined due to growing awareness of wrongful convictions and the high cost of death penalty cases compared to life imprisonment.

**2. Singapore: Strict Enforcement with High Deterrence Claims**

Singapore maintains one of the world's strictest death penalty regimes, with a focus on deterrence. Findings show:

- Mandatory Sentencing. Capital punishment is mandatory for certain crimes, including premeditated murder and drug trafficking. Judicial discretion is limited, raising concerns about proportionality and fairness.
- Deterrence Impact. The government claims a strong deterrence effect, citing low crime rates as evidence. However, human rights organizations argue that the data lacks independent verification.

**3. Japan: Cultural Acceptance and Procedural Length**

Japan retains the death penalty but applies it cautiously, with executions carried out after extensive appeals and psychological evaluations. Findings include:

- Lengthy Appeals Process. Death row inmates often spend years awaiting execution, with opportunities for appeals and review.
- Public Support. Surveys indicate broad public support for the death penalty in cases involving extreme violence.

Table 1. Key Comparative Findings

Criteria	Indonesia	USA	Singapore	Japan
Legal Basis	KUHP, Article 340	State-level statutes	Penal Code, mandatory	Penal Code, discretionary
Judicial Discretion	High	Varies by state	Limited	Moderate
Execution Methods	Firing Squad	Lethal injection	Hanging	Hanging
Human Rights Concerns	High	Moderate	High	Moderate
Public Support	Mixed	Declining	High	High

Deterrence Effectiveness	Unproven	Disputed	Claimed	Limited
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C. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several critical aspects of the implementation of capital punishment for premeditated murder in Indonesia, highlighting its legal, social, and ethical complexities. Indonesia retains the death penalty as a key component of its justice system, grounded in the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP), particularly Article 340, which prescribes the ultimate punishment for premeditated murder. However, the application of the death penalty has raised concerns regarding its effectiveness, consistency, and compliance with international human rights standards (Ansari, 2024). The introduction of the revised KUHP (Law No. 1 of 2023), which includes a 10-year probationary period before execution, signals a shift toward a more rehabilitative approach, yet challenges persist in ensuring uniform judicial application and safeguarding the rights of defendants. Inconsistencies in sentencing practices across jurisdictions raise concerns about potential arbitrariness and unequal access to justice. A key area of concern is the effectiveness of the death penalty as a deterrent to violent crime. Empirical data analyzed in this study suggest that capital punishment does not conclusively deter premeditated murder in Indonesia. Crime rates in provinces with high execution rates have not shown a significant decline, indicating that other factors, such as economic conditions and the efficiency of law enforcement, play a more substantial role in crime prevention. This finding is consistent with global trends, where the deterrence effect of the death penalty remains highly disputed, with studies in countries like the United States showing little correlation between executions and reductions in violent crime. In contrast, Singapore’s strict enforcement of the death penalty is often cited by its government as a deterrent, but the lack of independent verification casts doubt on these claims (Hartanto & Ningrum Amin, 2021).

Human rights considerations also play a significant role in the debate surrounding capital punishment in Indonesia. The country faces ongoing pressure from international organizations, such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and Amnesty International, to abolish or limit the use of the death penalty. Reports indicate that wrongful convictions, lack of adequate legal representation, and procedural deficiencies continue to undermine the fairness of the judicial system. The case of Wilfrida Soik, a migrant worker wrongfully sentenced to death, underscores the risks associated with capital punishment, particularly for vulnerable populations. Furthermore, the use of firing squads as the primary execution method has been widely criticized for its perceived cruelty and inhumane nature. This concern is further exacerbated by prolonged death row incarceration, leading to psychological distress among inmates and their families (Fardiansyah, 2021). Comparative analysis with other jurisdictions offers valuable insights into potential reforms for Indonesia. The United States, with its decentralized legal system, has implemented procedural safeguards such as mandatory appeals and DNA testing, aimed at reducing wrongful executions. However, the high financial costs and ethical concerns have led to a gradual decline in its use. On the other hand, Singapore maintains a strict, no-tolerance policy for certain crimes, with minimal judicial discretion, while Japan follows a more cautious approach, allowing for extensive appeals before execution. These differences underscore the diverse approaches countries adopt in balancing justice, deterrence, and human rights considerations.

Public perception in Indonesia regarding the death penalty remains divided. While a significant portion of the population supports capital punishment for heinous crimes, particularly those involving children and law enforcement officers, there is a growing movement advocating for its abolition. Civil society organizations and human rights

groups have been instrumental in raising awareness about the ethical and legal concerns surrounding capital punishment. However, political considerations often influence the application of the death penalty, particularly in high-profile cases where public pressure and political interests intersect (Djatkika et al., 2024). Given these findings, it is evident that Indonesia faces a complex challenge in balancing its commitment to maintaining public order with its obligations to uphold human rights principles. This study suggests that the government should consider adopting standardized sentencing guidelines to ensure consistency in the application of capital punishment. Additionally, enhancing access to legal representation, introducing alternative sentencing options such as life imprisonment without parole, and implementing a moratorium on executions to allow for comprehensive policy evaluation are recommended steps forward.

In conclusion, while the death penalty continues to be legally entrenched in Indonesia, its practical implementation reveals significant challenges that require immediate attention. Addressing issues related to fairness, deterrence, and human rights compliance will be crucial in shaping a justice system that aligns with both national security interests and international legal standards. Indonesia can benefit from examining the best practices of other nations to develop a more balanced and humane approach to capital punishment.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight significant challenges and complexities surrounding the implementation of capital punishment for premeditated murder in Indonesia. Despite being legally entrenched within the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP), the application of the death penalty continues to face scrutiny from both domestic and international perspectives. Indonesia's legal framework provides broad judicial discretion in death penalty sentencing, leading to inconsistent application across jurisdictions. Recent legal reforms, such as the introduction of a 10-year probationary period before execution, indicate a gradual shift towards a more rehabilitative approach. However, the absence of standardized sentencing guidelines raises concerns about fairness and transparency. Empirical evidence does not conclusively support the claim that the death penalty effectively deters premeditated murder in Indonesia. Socioeconomic factors, law enforcement efficiency, and public education initiatives appear to play a more crucial role in crime prevention. Indonesia faces international criticism for its continued use of capital punishment, particularly regarding the potential for wrongful convictions and lack of due process in some cases. International bodies such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and Amnesty International have urged Indonesia to reconsider its stance in line with international human rights obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Public opinion on the death penalty in Indonesia is divided, with a notable portion of the population supporting it for heinous crimes. Political considerations often influence judicial decisions in high-profile cases, potentially undermining the impartiality of the legal system. A comparative analysis with the United States, Singapore, and Japan reveals stark differences in procedural safeguards, judicial discretion, and public acceptance. While Singapore maintains a strict and mandatory enforcement approach, countries such as the U.S. and Japan have increasingly focused on procedural fairness and minimizing wrongful executions.

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