

# Obama Orders Policy Review on Executions

By PETER BAKER May 04, 2014

WASHINGTON — President Obama declared this week's botched execution in Oklahoma "deeply disturbing" and directed the attorney general on Friday to review how the death penalty is applied in the United States at a time when it has become increasingly debated.

Weighing in on a polarizing issue that he rarely discusses, Mr. Obama said the Oklahoma episode, in which a prisoner remained groaning in pain after sedatives were apparently not fully delivered, underscored concerns with capital punishment as it is carried out in America today. While reiterating his support for the death penalty in certain cases, Mr. Obama said Americans should "ask ourselves some difficult and profound questions" about its use.

"In the application of the death penalty in this country, we have seen significant problems — racial bias, uneven application of the death penalty, you know, situations in which there were individuals on death row who later on were discovered to have been innocent because of exculpatory evidence," Mr. Obama told reporters. "And all these, I think, do raise significant questions about how the death penalty is being applied."

Whether Mr. Obama's concerns lead to policy proposals remained far from certain, but the administration review comes at a time when the use of the death penalty has begun to recede in the United States. The number of executions has fallen by half since its modern peak in 2000, while a half-dozen states have abolished capital punishment over the last seven years and others have imposed moratoriums or are exploring legislation to repeal it.

The federal government has effectively imposed its own moratorium on carrying out executions since 2010 while trying to figure out issues surrounding the drug cocktail commonly used for lethal injection. The Justice Department said Friday that it would build on that assessment.

But critics argue that the times have changed with reports of racial disparity and DNA evidence exonerating some on death row. Sixty percent of the American

public still backs the death penalty for those convicted of murder, but support has fallen to the lowest level in more than 40 years, according to Gallup.

“The individual who was subject to the death penalty had committed heinous crimes, terrible crimes,” he said of the Oklahoma inmate. “And I’ve said in the past that there are certain circumstances in which a crime is so terrible that the application of the death penalty may be appropriate — mass killings, the killings of children.”

Diann Rust-Tierney, executive director of the [National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty](#), applauded Mr. Obama’s resolve to investigate concerns about Oklahoma and the use of capital punishment more generally.

“The significant thing is the president as a person who supports the death penalty is expressing these concerns,” she said. “The president is not alone among those who support the death penalty who say this execution crossed the line and has other concerns.”

From: <http://cn.nytimes.com/usa/20140504/c04penalty/dual/>

1. What do you think about death penalty?
2. Do you agree with death penalty?
3. Why some people support the death penalty, and why some people support with abolish it?
4. What situations need death penalty? Why should we ban it?
5. In Taiwan, do we need death penalty?
6. Image that, a capital prisoner who was released murders someone. Do you still want to ban death penalty?
7. Image that, a capital prisoner who was released contributes for all society, like saving many people lives.

Do you still agree with death penalty?

8. If you were the beloved of the victim, do you want the criminal to be sentenced to death?
9. Does the threat of the death penalty reduce crime rates?
10. If execution is unacceptable, what is the alternative?