

A Prison: Keeper of Dark Secrets

Ayesha Subhani

Abstract: This article discusses the psychological and social consequences of harsh prison conditions and punitive practices. It argues that excessive torture, poor living conditions, and inadequate mental health support may contribute to long-term psychological disorders and increase the likelihood of future criminal behavior. The article emphasizes rehabilitation over excessive punishment and highlights the importance of humane prison environments, counseling, and evidence-based correctional policies to promote successful reintegration into society.

Keywords: Prison, Rehabilitation, Punishment, Torture, PTSD, Mental Health, Criminal Justice, Recidivism

A prison is a place of difficult times and the world doesn't care because it is the devil's retreat. To put the argument in a wider perspective we should try and replay the wartime stories in our heads. Wartime stories will always be fascinating while we are not at the receiving end. The tension is immense because the victims are completely uncertain of their future. The persistent feeling of fear and mental trauma turns into anxiety then into chronic depression. A life-threatening situation which makes people volatile and unpredictable. They may become extremely productive positive personalities or may turn into social-outcasts like terrorists. For whoever is inside a prison, metaphorically, he/she is like a wartime victim.

A prison is a place meant to confine individuals in isolation. It is an enclosed and dark place where criminals are kept in punishment for a legally defined period. A punishment meant to correct their wrongs by living in solitary and working odd jobs at the premise or outside. There are also designated prisons for higher-order criminals called a *penitentiary* for longer sentences. But the punishment and torture can have fine line differences in the absence of any order. And because there is torture, there are very rare moments of happiness inside a prison. Prisons are an ancient concept and so is punitive torture. A slap can be categorized as emotional torture based on humanitarian grounds, but surprisingly physical torture has well-defined categories within the law. Allegations of torture and ill-treatment have been documented in some prison systems despite legal prohibitions. The theory of punishment lists the type, style, intensity, and severity of assault for crooked criminals. As an opinion, since prisons are rehabilitation centers for criminal minds therefore harsh punitive measures must reduce. Because sometimes, a prison makes it difficult for some prisoners to survive. We've heard stories of murder and assault in prisons either by fellow prisoners or by the policing staff. Punishments are legal and crucial for behavioral correction of the criminals but some perspective theories differ completely. For example, '*hanged to death*' is a capital punishment within the law but the psychological implications of such harsh punishments are far-reaching. One person dies in execution while his/her kin become another rebel to avenge his/her death.

Henry Ford said, "Capital Punishment is as fundamentally wrong as a cure for crime as charity is wrong as a cure for poverty".

A Research study mentions a horrifying massacre in *Gladani Prison* (1922) in which a total of 111 prisoners died and 37 more were injured as the police director ordered it and later justified the act of violence. Hundreds of such chilling incidences occur regularly and the world is completely unaware of it. Punishments like standing nose deep in cold water, sexual assault using unimaginable tools, forced to eat stale food, negligent medical treatment, unhygienic living conditions, boxed living, extremely monotonous but physically exhausting schedule, and the list continues. As mentioned earlier, punishments are legal but they can leave harsh psychological impressions which can ruin any personality in the long run. For example, A Bollywood movie *New York* shows that plausible culprit had to undergo *third-degree torture* for months without a legal court trial. The protagonist showed symptoms of hallucinations and phobia of police personnel for a long time and eventually becomes a terrorist to prove a point. No matter the terrorist dies in the end but his mental scars were visible. This exactly shows the implications of torture and assault which may scar the life of an individual.

There are so many prisons that are known for their violence. Prisoners start to develop suicidal tendencies. Torture makes them chronically depressed; their mental illness starts low but sooner convert into serious disorders. It gets worse because there is no counseling or preventive medication available. Imagine punishments like 400 prisoners being kept in a single hall in which they ate, slept, and did their chores. In such adverse conditions, people have committed suicide by eating rat poison, rusty folks, or drain cleaners. Over the top, there is little hierarchy but treacherous politics. It's time we imagine ourselves being locked in a dark room for at least 22 hours!

Point of contemplation; If torture is heroic, then revenge cannot be a crime.

We've seen movies of celebrated police officers who extracted relevant information through torture. We have also read stories in which a criminal seeks and eventually takes revenge. The feeling of revenge is stronger than one can imagine because torture affects the human brain. The amygdala is affected by visible conditions of fear, trauma, or a phobia of some magnitude. (Ledoux, 1998) When a person is severely tortured then the brain may cease to work properly and may start to live in a delusion that torture is normal. Their cognitive capacity and their ability to think drops down. In some cases, their emotions and senses become numb. Some

extreme cases of PTSD show symptoms of insomnia, paranoia, hallucinations, delusions, and even self-harm. The above-mentioned symptoms and mental issues are serious and they make a person highly reactive. The long-term implications of such prisoners, even after they have completed their sentences are troublesome. The recidivism rate of former criminals to commit another crime after they have completed their sentence is quite high (<https://bjs.ojp.gov/topics/recidivism-and-reentry>, n.d.)

We cannot change what they have been through in the past but we can help them now to give them a better and meaningful life. People suffering from PTSD must be handled with extreme care because their mental state is unstable and fragile. They need care and time to let things settle their thoughts and memories. It is not an easy thing to let go of such horrific moments but time can heal the deepest of wounds.