

## **Crime and Punishment in Liberia**

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Liberia, a West African country, is governed by and based on strict and tough laws. These laws are so strict that they sometimes frighten us, the citizens. However, due to the tough laws, we have little crime, and the citizens are mindful of the penalties that are attached to crimes.

The penalties are determined by the type of crime one has committed. The toughest punishments are applied to criminals such as murderers, impersonators, and citizens who steal federal money. These criminals are put on trial and, if found guilty, are put either into prison for life or put to death by hanging.

Citizens who commit petty crime such as traffic violations, drunk driving and running traffic lights are seen by a judge, pay a fine, and then are released.

Those accused of rape, robbery, and assault are put on trial. If found guilty, they are put in prison for five to ten years. We do not have an appeal system, although under certain circumstances, a case will be appealed or retried. However, the system is so slow that, by the time that particular case is appealed or retried, the convict has often served most of, if not all of, his term.

The citizens of Liberia feel that the laws are too tough. Many citizens have demonstrated against how criminals are treated in prison, such as their being beaten before they are released. Another ill treatment is hard labor while in prison. Convicts may have to work on the field all day, plant their own food, or paint and clean public property.

On the one hand, our criminal laws are too strict. On the other hand, they help to make the streets of Liberia safe to walk at any time of day. We learn to have respect for our fellow citizens. We place no citizen above the law. The laws of a country must be respected and obeyed by all.

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