

Increasing the Number of Prisons Won't Solve the Crime Problem

By *Harun Yahya* on March 18, 2018

Every day, we come across news reports about femicide, child rape, scammers, serial murderers and people who commit brutal crimes. In a world, where the crime rate is on an ever-increasing rise, the first thing that comes to mind about crime prevention is the necessity and importance of prisons. The only solace we can find in the face of growing crime is the prospect that criminals will be locked away in jail where they will pay for their crimes.

Although prisons serve a function of securing criminals away from society and preventing them from committing further crimes, this is surely not their only quality. Prisons should also be able to serve as rehabilitation centers. Especially when global crime rates and the number of prisoners in jail are considered, it is important that they leave these centers as 'rehabilitated people, and thus become healthy, normal, reasonable and level-headed individuals who make a contribution as work force, are beneficial for and, more importantly, harmless to society.

That being said, are prisons capable of serving this purpose? Unfortunately, the answer to this question seems to be 'no.'

There is a clear indication that prisons are gradually losing their function of preventing crime. In many countries of the world, while the number of crimes committed is increasing year by year, prisons are gradually becoming places where prisoners are simply warehoused; worse yet, criminals become more professionally competent in committing crimes and criminal organizations openly operate. In the United States, 43% of prisoners released in 2005 were thrown back into prison after two years, and 77% were in prison again after five years.

One of the most important reasons why prisons lose function is the increasing rate of crime. As the number of crimes increase, naturally, the number of convicted criminals also increases.

For example, in the 1990's there were 40,000 convicts in prisons around Britain, but today this figure is close to 86,000. This situation necessitates the establishment of new prisons, but due to high costs many countries cannot do that and for this reason prisons experience massive overcrowding.

For instance, there are 469 prisoners in the prison in Swansea, Britain, which has a capacity of 268 prisoners. The overcrowding is even worse in Leeds. Here, 1128 people are serving time in a prison with a capacity of 669. Similar overcrowding situations create new problems. Although the costs increase in proportion to the increasing number of prisoners, the money allocated for this does not increase as much. As such, one of the first methods utilized to keep costs down is to keep the number of prison officers low. Research shows that the number of officers in prisons in Britain is 40% lower than what it should be. Due to the reduced number of staff, prisoners are deprived of activities such as work, education, health and sports.

The same is true for the US as well. While the population of the United States is one-

twentieth of the world's population, the number of prisoners in US alone is equivalent to one-quarter of the number of prisoners in the entire world. More than 2.3 million people in this country are serving time in prisons. Another indication that shows prisons can no longer prevent crime is the increase in the number of crimes committed in prisons.

In Britain, the self-harm rate among prisoners was 17% in 2017 and violence among prisoners is also quite common. In Britain, prisoners tend to show violence against each other and against prison officials. Last year, 84 violent incidents were recorded for every 1,000 prisoners, which with a 32% increase compared to the previous year. Specialist teams such as the NTRG Tornado Team are deployed to prevent violent incidents in prisons.

The prevalence of violence fuels gangs and riots in prisons which leads to a high number of deaths. A bloody showdown between rival drug gangs in Brazil's Amazonas province turned into a riot and 56 people were killed in the resulting disorder. Six of them were killed by decapitation.

Under these circumstances, countries are trying to temper the number of crimes by opening more prisons, hiring more prison officers and increasing the number of police officers in the streets. However, this is still not enough and crime rates continue to increase rapidly.

What needs to be done is not to increase the capacity of the prisons but to take effective preventive measures against crime. Some of the potential measures are as follows: It is important to employ different types of sanctions instead of solely relying on imprisonment. These can be employed during or after imprisonment. People who commit crimes such as sexual harassment, rape, abuse and animal torture can be publicized and exposed in public places.

Another possible measure is to avoid putting first time offenders, in other words amateur criminals, in the same prisons with experienced criminals.

Social campaigns can be organized against culturally motivated crimes such as blood feuds and honor killings to show their flawed and evil nature.

Another measure is increasing the criminal apprehension rate by improving the technical capabilities of the police; people are less likely to commit crimes when they are sure they will get caught.

Imprisonment should not be seen as the only form of punishment. This form of punishment further strengthens the criminal inclinations of some individuals. This is why some individuals who have been released from prison often commit crimes again. Minor crimes should not be avoided to be punished with imprisonment. In the case of recurrent crimes, the crime should be considered aggravated and punished accordingly to prevent being repeated to a larger extent.

In the fight against crime, increasing the punishment of a crime or aggravating the crime itself is not sufficient. The goal should be to eliminate crime altogether. For this, it is imperative to adopt an education system that will eliminate ideologies harmful to society. With a spiritual and scientific education program that will develop the feelings and understanding of national consciousness, love, and loyalty, it is possible to guide societies from hate towards love. The perceptions of society can be altered easily by utilizing the press and media tools. Creating fair solutions to important matters in a society, such as poverty, unemployment, and so on would also help in this regard. It should not be forgotten that it is primarily the problem of hatred which leads people to

commit crimes. As long as governments and societies do not define a program that will eliminate the perception of hate in the first place, it is unlikely that technical solutions will lead to any long-lasting and meaningful solutions.

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