

Life Imprisonment: An International Perspective

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Research project (challenge!): Life Imprisonment Worldwide

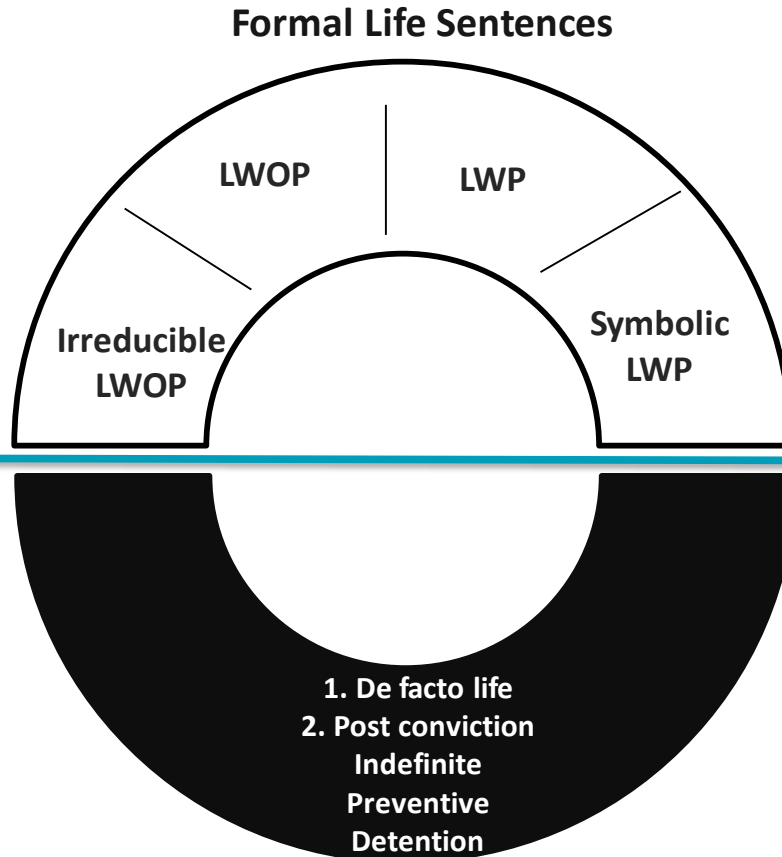
- **Introducing life**
 - **Imposing life**
 - **Doing life**
 - **Release from life**
 - **Rethinking life**
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Introducing life

*‘Although everyone knows what the words life imprisonment do not mean, nobody knows what they do mean.’
Lord Mustill (1994)*

Death

No Release

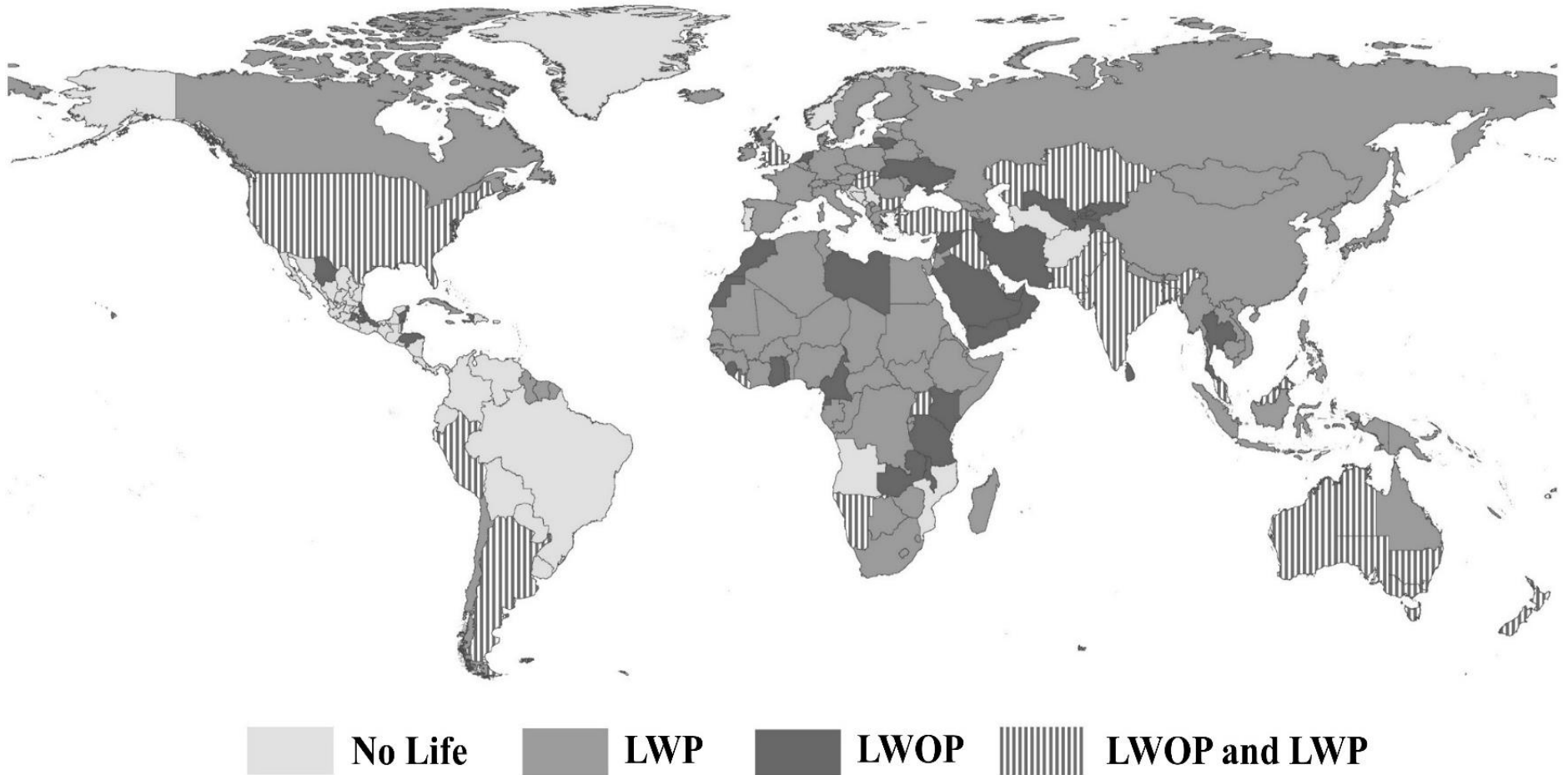


Definite Release

Determinate Sentences

Life imprisonment is a sentence following a criminal conviction, which gives the state the power to detain a person in prison for life, that is, until they die there.

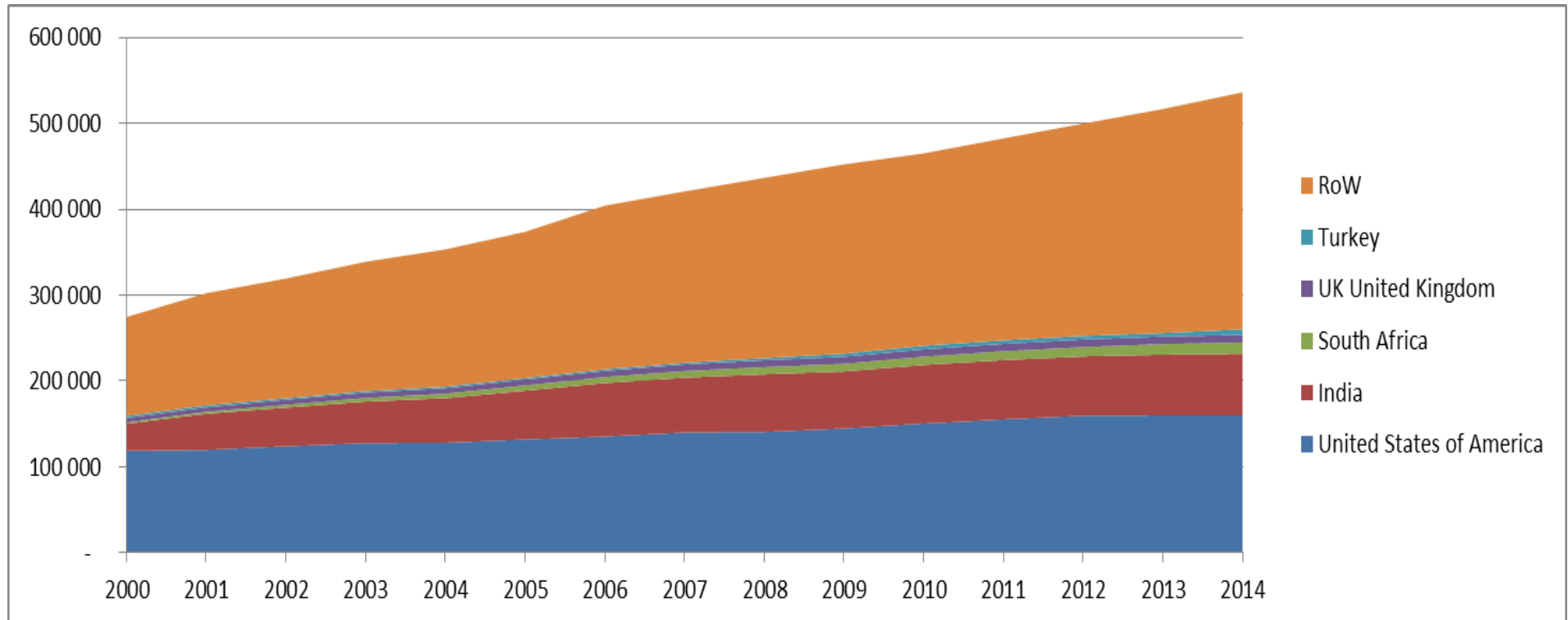
Life Imprisonment Worldwide



Life imprisonment in selected countries

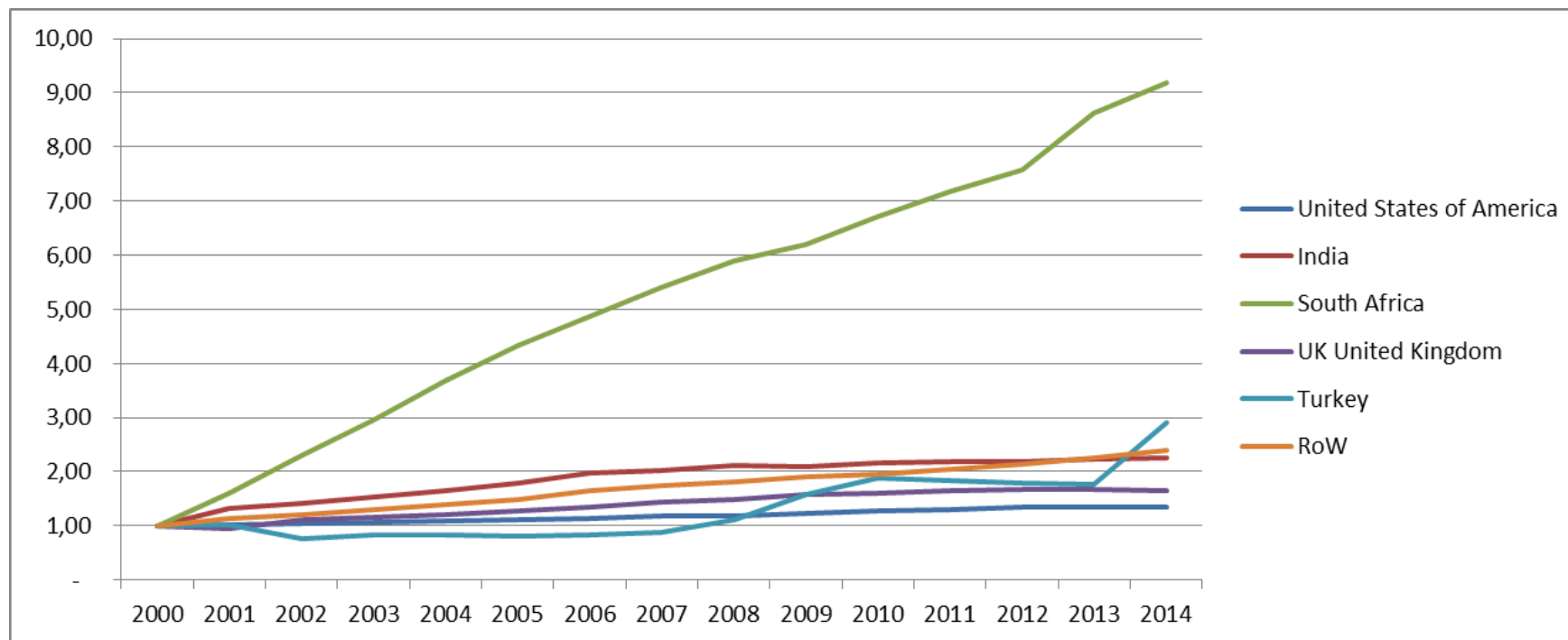
Country	Life Sentenced Prisoners	Percentage of Sentenced Prisoners	Per 100 000 of National Population
France	466	0.77	0.7
Germany	1953	3.58	2.4
India	71632	53.66	5.5
Kenya	3676	11.39	8.2
Russia	1766	0.35	1.2
South Africa	13190	10.51	22.7
United Kingdom	8661	10.96	13.4
United States	159520	10.57	50.0

Number of life-sentenced prisoners in the world, 2000-2014



Our estimates suggest that in 2000 there were 274,432 life-sentenced prisoners worldwide. This increased to 536,185 in 2014.

Growth of life-sentenced prisoners in the world



Doing life imprisonment

■ The pains of (life) imprisonment

- Loss of liberty
- Deprivation of goods and services
- Deprivation of relationships
- Deprivation of autonomy
- Deprivation of security

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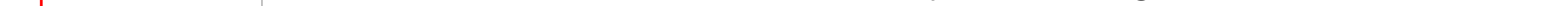
- Doing indeterminate time
- No hope of release

■ The treatment of life-sentenced prisoners

- Heightened security
 - Impoverished regimes
 - For example, Russia...
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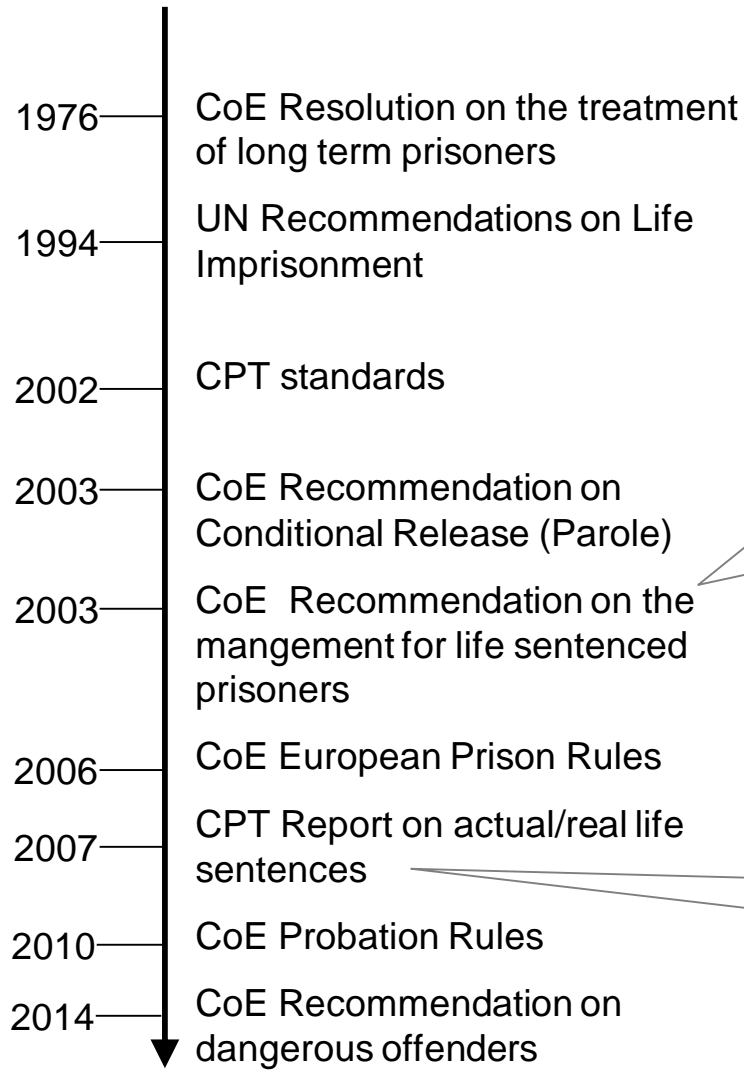
Application Particularly grave crimes against human life

Minimum tariff 25 years

<i>Russian 'life'</i>			Strict regime	Space: Cells Visits / year: 2 short (max 4hrs) Parcels / year: 1 large + 1 small
			Ordinary regime	Space: Dormitories Visits / year: 2 short + 2 long (max 72hrs) Parcels / year: 3 large + 3 small
			Facilitated regime	Space: Dormitories Visits / year: 3 short + 3 long Parcels / year: 4 large + 4 small (after 12 mths good behaviour)

Penalty beyond custody

What do human rights standards say?



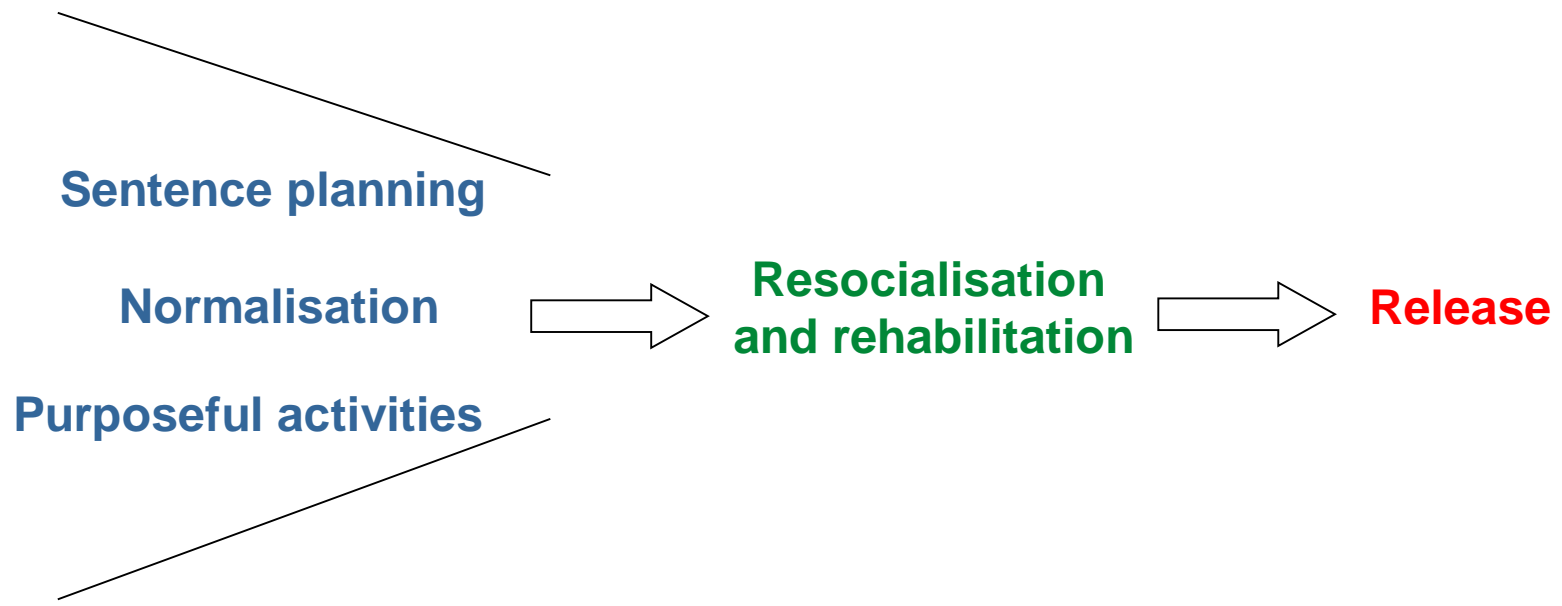
1976	CoE Resolution on the treatment of long term prisoners
1994	UN Recommendations on Life Imprisonment
2002	CPT standards
2003	CoE Recommendation on Conditional Release (Parole)
2003	CoE Recommendation on the management for life sentenced prisoners
2006	CoE European Prison Rules
2007	CPT Report on actual/real life sentences
2010	CoE Probation Rules
2014	CoE Recommendation on dangerous offenders

Six key principles that should govern the treatment and management of life sentence and long-term prisoners:

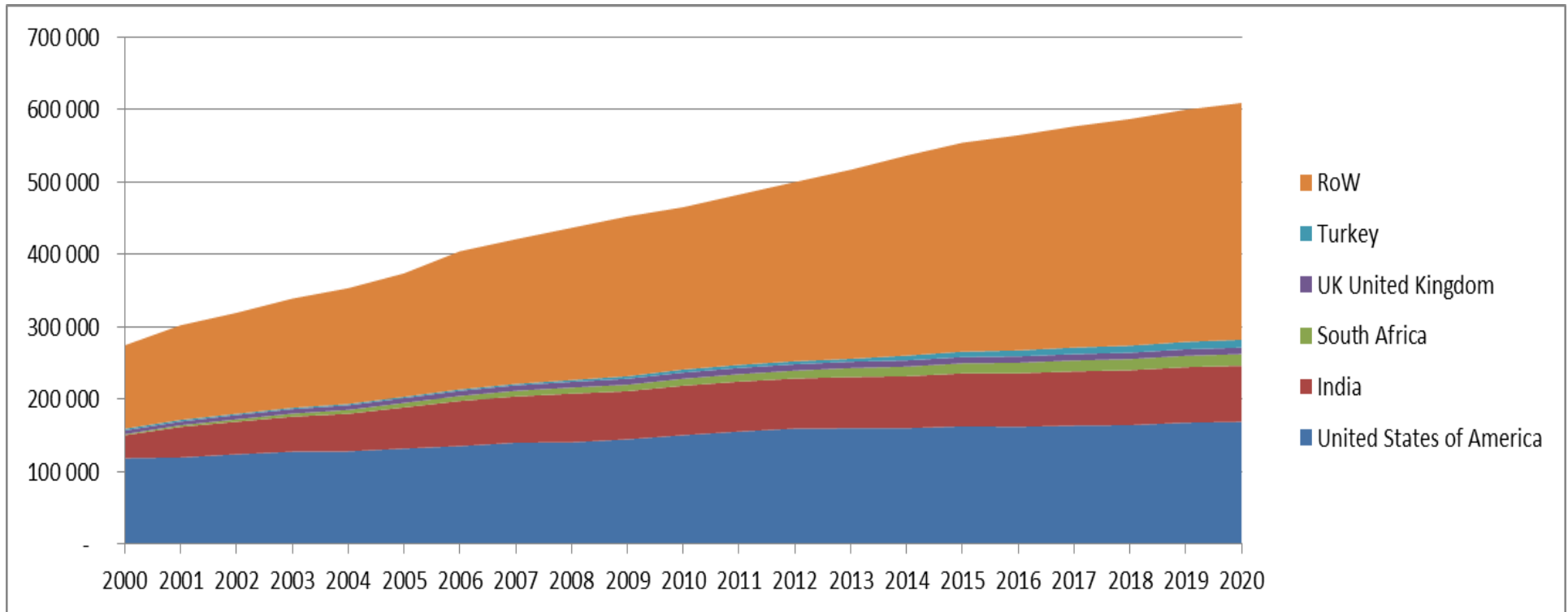
- Individualisation
- Normalisation
- Responsibility
- Security and safety
- Non-segregation
- Progression

The CPT has found that many life-sentenced prisoners have been subject to special restrictions likely to exacerbate the deleterious effects inherent in long-term imprisonment; such as limited visit entitlement.

Doing life imprisonment well?



Rethinking life



We project that the total number of life-sentenced prisoners worldwide will increase to around 608,000 by 2020, as compared to 536,000 in 2014 and 274,000 in 2000.

Human Rights to the Rescue?

- Dignity (absence of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment)
- Proportionate Punishment
- Hope

Hope is an important and constitutive aspect of the human person. Those who commit the most abhorrent and egregious of acts and who inflict untold suffering upon others, nevertheless retain their fundamental humanity and carry within themselves the capacity to change. Long and deserved though their prison sentences may be, they retain the right to hope that, someday, they may have atoned for the wrongs which they have committed. They ought not to be deprived entirely of such hope. To deny them the experience of hope would be to deny a fundamental aspect of their humanity and, to do that, would be degrading.

(Judge Power-Forde in *Vinter v UK* 2013)

Human rights and their limitations

- Abolishing Life without Parole
- Better procedures ✓

But:

- More life-sentenced prisoners✕
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- The importance of a comprehensive approach
 - Abolishing all life imprisonment?
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Thank you!

Life Imprisonment Worldwide Project

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