**Rights of convicted criminals in Denmark - then and now.**

Convicted criminals have different rights all over the world.

In the Danish society there are many different ways to get sentenced for crimes. An unconditional punishment means that you have to go to jail in a period of time which the court announces. In some cases you can serve your punishment with fetters.

The other way to get punished is conditional punishment, which means that you don't have to go to prison if - for a period of time - you respect certain rules and demands. You can also serve your sentence by doing community service. If you break any of the demands while you have a conditional punishment, there is a chance you will go to prison.

Criminals may be punished to pay off their debt to society, therefore it may seem like they haven't got any rights, but they have. They always have a right for an explanation, and more specifically they have a right to a lawyer, and they also have the rights to vote.

**Rights and treatment of convicted criminals earlier**

In the eighteenth century methods such as public whipping, hanging and decapitation of limbs, and more, were used to punish people who committed a crime. In 1866 - after Denmark had become a constitutional democracy - a new penal law was adopted. Here they stopped using almost all forms of physical punishment. They did not stop entirely though. At the time they thought that using physical punishment against young people and children was good for them. Regarding criminals they thought it would work very well, to start isolating them from others. It was quickly found out that solitary confinement led the criminals to have anxiety, psychoses and depression. Despite these consequences of isolating convicted criminals, it was done in Denmark up until 1920, and people could risk being in solitary confinement for more than a year. The ultimate punishment, the death penalty, was abolished in 1930. It was, however, quite controversially re-introduced after the German occupation of Denmark in the second world war. Here Danes who had committed serious crimes in the service of the Germans were sentenced to death - just as Danes who had been active in the resistance had been executed by the Germans during the war.

**Crime and punishment in the nineteenth century**

The most common reason people became criminals were poverty. People were hungry and desperate and fought for survival, in a time where poor people were looked down upon and not taken care of. Some women became imprisoned for infanticide, because they were poor and did not have access to a midwife. The women who were in prison for infanticide, were women who could not provide for their child, and had left them somewhere, for example a children’s home or just somewhere they hoped someone would provide and care for the child. This was illegal and therefore they were imprisoned.

*A typical danish prison cell. Including a private bathroom and fridge.*

**What does it mean to be a felon?**

Being a felon means that you have done something criminal and you must therefore be punished for it, so technically a felon is anyone who’s been convicted for a “fatal crime” But in reality you can use the word felon to describe anyone who you think has done something terrible when talking about crimes.

**What rights do you lose when you become a convicted felon?**

If you are a convicted felon and are being sentenced in court, the court will normally decide  how many necessary expenses the felon needs to pay under the processing of the case, but after the sentence the expenses will be charged of the public-services.

If you are convicted, the court can choose to deprive some rights, for example the right to drive car, the court can also decide whether they want to deprive some of the felons valuables and in some cases the felon also has to pay replacement to the victim

But maybe the most considerable right you lose, is the freedom of movement. In the Danish justice system the general idea is that your punishment is basically the loss of liberty. Which means the felon does not lose his standard civil rights like the right to vote or the right to use his freedom of speech and other matters.

Today felons have the right to vote when there are elections. They also have the right to get a job to earn some money in the prison as long as it is safe for people  around them. A criminal person also has the right to be put before a judge in court within 24 hours.

**What is the purpose of punishment today?**

In Denmark we punish for several reasons. The first one is retribution. If you do something that affects a victim, it is important that the guilty person get a sentence, that can be equal to the criminal act. The society controls that they will not be doing a similar criminal act, but instead be at controlled punishment. The second reason for punishment is to prevent another criminal act. This is done by punishing the criminal and thus deterring. If the criminal act only has the purpose of making money (there are no victims/no one gets hurt) the punishment will often just release a bigger amount of money that must be paid back. Another punishment of a criminal act without a victim can also give you obligation for free work for the society. When we punish we follow the constitution and what it says. The constitution is an old book that was last changed back in 1939 and it consists of the paragraphs that we judge by.

**Do felons lose the right to bear arms? and why?**

Every citizen in Denmark can apply for a weapons license. Each case will be examined by the police’s weapons department and they will decide if you should own a lethal weapon. If you commit a non-violent crime, chances are that your license won’t be revoked or reexamined. However if you commit a violent crime, the police’s weapons department will have to reexamine your case and decide whether or not your license should be revoked.

A lot of weapons also need a hunting license, if you want to purchase a firearm. You also have to pay a fee of 1.085kr to apply for a weapon’s license.

They will also examine your health. The main aspects is your mental health, and if you are healthy and stable you will probably get accepted.