



06 - VOCABULARY: LAW & JUSTICE



The government is responsible for **passing laws**, and the courts and legal system are in charge of **upholding** and **enforcing the law**.

When a person is **charged with a crime**, he or she must **appear in court** to **stand trial**.

Both the prosecution and the defense will present their cases before the judge and jury. After consideration, the judge or jury will **reach a verdict**.

If there is **irrefutable, overwhelming, or concrete evidence**, this means that it is very obvious that the person committed the crime, and it's possible that the **jury will be unanimous** in their decision.

However, if the **evidence is circumstantial or inconclusive** then the decision will be more difficult – it's possible to have a **hung jury**, which cannot agree on the verdict.

Less serious crimes will receive a **light sentence** – for example, the offender may have to **pay a fine** or **do community service**.

For more serious crimes, the person will probably **go to prison** – and especially heinous crimes can result in a **harsh sentence** such as **life in prison** (or **life imprisonment**) or, in some places, the **death penalty**.

After the decision is made, the lawyers can choose to **appeal the verdict**), and the case may turn into a **prolonged legal battle** as the courts decide whether to **uphold** or **overturn the original verdict**.

As a **convicted criminal** is **serving time**, he or she should remember the possibility of being **released from prison** early for **good behavior**, as long as they are not deemed a **threat to society**.

A criminal who is released early is said to be **“on parole,”** meaning that he or she must comply with certain conditions after getting out of jail – such as getting a job and refraining from drug/alcohol use.