

Exile, pronounced EHG zyl, is banishment from one's own land. A person who has been punished by being exiled is called an exile. Exile was a common form of punishment for crimes and political offenses in ancient Palestine, Greece, and Rome. Civil wars often resulted in exile for leaders of the losing side.

In modern times, many countries have sent criminals and political offenders to distant parts of their realms. Thus, Great Britain sent convicts to the American Colonies and Australia in order to provide a source of labor to develop the new lands. In the mid-1900's in the Soviet Union, criminals and political offenders were sent in great numbers to work in Siberia. Most exiles of the present day are people who fled from their own countries because they were threatened by the tyrannical governments there. The Constitution of the United States prohibits the exile of a U.S. citizen. However, a noncitizen can be deported from the United States back to his or her country of origin.

The homesickness of the exile is a favorite theme of literature. In the Bible, Cain, sent to wander over the face of the earth, cries out that his punishment is more than he can bear. Many poets have spent part of their lives in exile and have expressed their longing for their home.

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