

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: AMR 51/086/2004 (Public)
News Service No: 127
19 May 2004

USA: Amnesty International appalled at execution of mentally ill man

Amnesty International is appalled at Governor Rick Perry's decision to allow the execution of Kelsey Patterson to go ahead in Texas last night, despite a rare recommendation from the state Board of Pardons and Paroles that the death sentence of this seriously mentally ill man be commuted.

Kelsey Patterson's execution is another shameful chapter in the ugly history of Texas state killing. There was even compelling evidence that Kelsey Patterson's mental illness may have risen to the level of insanity, rendering his execution unconstitutional under US law.

In any event, the execution flew in the face of repeated resolutions at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights against the execution of the mentally ill. Kelsey Patterson had long suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. His crime, a double murder committed in 1992, appears to have been the result of his illness.

He may have been incompetent to stand trial -- the proceedings were marked by his paranoid delusions and ramblings, including about the electronic devices he was convinced had been implanted in him. Since his execution date was set at the end of last year, he apparently believed that he had received a permanent stay of execution and an "amnesty".

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, in an extremely rare occurrence, recommended that the execution be stopped. Governor Perry, who had already allowed 82 executions to proceed since he took office in 2001, rejected the Board's recommendation.

The evidence of war crimes committed by US forces in Iraq has left the USA's claims to be global human rights champion in tatters. Governor Perry had the opportunity to begin to show that his country is serious about meeting international standards of justice and decency. Instead, his failure of leadership demonstrated that the USA has serious human rights problems at home as well as abroad.

For more information, please see: "Another Texas injustice: The case of Kelsey Patterson, mentally ill man facing execution" <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR510472004>

