

PUBLIC

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Death Penalty

20 November 2001

BELIZE

Gilroy "Hooty" Wade (m), aged 20

Oscar "Negro" Catzim Mendez (m), aged 20

Glenford Baptist (m), aged 26

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The three men named above were sentenced to death on 6 November. They had been convicted of the murder of Oswin White, aged 21, who was shot dead on 2 July 2000, in Belize City. The Governor-General has the power to grant them clemency, on the advice of the 10 person Belize Advisory Council. If their execution goes ahead, it would be the first in Belize for 16 years.

According to their defence, the men were allegedly convicted on the basis of evidence of a key witness who stated that she had been standing at a distance of 200 yards when she saw them approach the scene of the crime, and that the men in question were wearing black and had their faces covered with stockings.

In passing sentence, the judge told each of the three men: "At a time and place appointed by the Governor General, you will be hanged by the neck until you are dead and may God have mercy on your soul". An appeal will be launched, which is due to be heard by the Court of Appeal on 12 February 2002.

Death by hanging is mandatory for murder in Belize, except where extenuating circumstances can be proved. The last execution was carried out in June 1985, when Kent Bowers was hanged despite a petition for clemency reportedly signed by 2,500 people. Since then death sentences has been passed many times, though no one has been executed.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, regardless of the guilt or innocence of those sentenced. It is a punishment that is a symptom of, not a solution to, a culture of violence, and contributes nothing to efforts to confront violent crime or assist its victims.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:**

- acknowledging that Gilroy Wade, Oscar Catzim Mendez and Glenford Baptist have been convicted of a very serious crime, and expressing sympathy for the relatives and friends of Oswin White;
- welcoming the fact that no executions have been carried out in Belize for more than 15 years, and stressing that the resumption of executions would be a retrograde step in the protection of human rights for all Belize's citizens;
- calling for clemency and urging that the death sentences of Gilroy Wade, Oscar Catzim Mendez and Glenford Baptist be commuted, pointing out that the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments;
- calling for all death sentences to be commuted in the interests of justice, human dignity and the international reputation of Belize as a "a tranquil haven of democracy", as described by the Minister of National Security.

**APPEALS TO:**

Governor-General

H.E. Colville Young

Office of the Governor-General  
Belize House  
Belmopan, BELIZE  
**Telegrams: Governor-General, Belmopan, Belize**  
**Fax: + 501 8 22050**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Prime Minister  
Rt. Hon. Said Musa  
Office of the Prime Minister  
New Administrative Building  
Belmopan, BELIZE  
**Telegrams: Prime Minister, Belmopan, Belize**  
**Fax: + 501 8 20071**  
**e-mail: access@btl.net (mark for the attention of the prime minister)**  
**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Attorney General and Minister of Information  
Mr Godfrey Smith  
Attorney General's Chambers  
c/o Prime Ministers Office  
New Administrative Building  
Belmopan, BELIZE  
**Telegrams: Attorney General, Belmopan, Belize**  
**Fax: + 501 8 20071**  
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General**

**COPIES TO:**  
Human Rights Commission of Belize  
37 Garza Avenue  
Belmopan  
Belize  
**Tel/Fax: +501 8 22779**

and to diplomatic representatives of Belize accredited to your country

**You may also write to:**

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and to diplomatic representatives of Belize accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 January 2002.