

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 15/93 Death Penalty

15 February 1993

USA (Georgia): Larry LONCHAR

Larry Lonchar is scheduled to be executed by the state of Georgia, USA, on 24 February 1993. He has chosen to give up his legal appeals, and has consented to the state carrying out his execution.

Larry Lonchar, white, was sentenced to death in June 1987 for the murders of Charles Smith, his son, Steven Smith, and Margaret Sweat, in October 1986. An accomplice in the crime was convicted in a separate trial and received a life sentence.

According to reports, Larry Lonchar is severely mentally disturbed. In March 1990 he was examined for five hours by a psychiatrist for the defence. The psychiatrist found that Lonchar had suffered severe brain damage at some point in his life, which had left him "neurologically impaired", and he reportedly concluded that Lonchar is a manic-depressive with paranoid tendencies. Lonchar has had his execution scheduled several times before. His sister and anti-death penalty groups have previously filed appeals on Lonchar's behalf claiming that he is mentally ill and is seeking a state-assisted suicide. In the past these appeals have won stays of execution. However, these appeals have been overruled and Lonchar has been found competent to be executed. This latest date is considered to be extremely serious.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and as a violation of the right to life, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Amnesty International is additionally concerned in this case that Larry Lonchar's execution may contravene United Nations Economic and Social (ECOSOC) safeguards protecting the rights of persons facing the death penalty. ECOSOC Resolution 1989/64, adopted in May 1989, recommends among other things "...eliminating the death penalty for persons suffering from mental retardation or extremely limited mental competence, whether at the state of sentence or execution."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As of January 1993 there were 109 prisoners under sentence of death in Georgia. The most recent person to be executed by the state was Warren McCleskey, on 25 September 1990. The method of execution in the state is electrocution. In Georgia, the state Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) has sole power to grant clemency or issue stays, and reviews cases at its discretion.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/telephone calls/express or airmail letters preferably in English:

- expressing concern that Larry Lonchar is scheduled to be executed on 24 February 1993;
- urging the Georgia BPP to grant clemency to Larry Lonchar and commute his death sentence;
- urging the BPP to give the case of Larry Lonchar a thorough review in the light of reports that Larry Lonchar is severely mentally disturbed;
- referring to ECOSOC Resolution 1989/64;

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- urging that as a very minimum measure, Larry Lonchar be granted a stay of execution to allow him to reconsider his decision not to pursue the many avenues of legal appeals still left open to him.

APPEALS TO:

Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles
Floyd Veterans Memorial Building, 5th Floor, East Tower
2 Martin Luther King Drive, SE
Atlanta, GA 30334, USA

Telegrams: Georgia Pardons Paroles Board, Atlanta, GA 30334, USA

Telephone: + 1 404 656 5703

+ 1 404 656 5887

Faxes: + 1 404 651 8502

Salutation: Dear Board Members

COPIES TO: to diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY to arrive in USA by 24 February 1993.