

PUBLIC

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31 May 2000

Further information on EXTRA 48/00 (AMR 51/73/00, 18 May 2000) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Oklahoma) Roger James Berget, white, aged 39

Roger Berget remains scheduled to die by lethal injection on 8 June, after the Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board voted to reject clemency for him by three votes to one on 30 May. He was sentenced to death in 1987 for the 1985 murder of Rick Patterson.

After the state had presented its case for execution and the defence for clemency, Roger Berget was led into the room in handcuffs, shackles and belly chains. He told his lawyer that he did not wish to speak to the Board and was led out of the room again. The Board has yet to recommend clemency in a death penalty case, and it remains to be seen what would convince it to do so. Some local defence attorneys predict that a growing number of condemned inmates will decide not to take part in a procedure which they consider to be humiliating and a foregone conclusion. In an article in *The Oklahoman* newspaper on 29 May one of the board members, appointed by the Governor, denied that the clemency procedure was a rubber-stamping exercise.

Oklahoma has already put six prisoners to death this year, second only to Texas, and has scheduled another four, including Roger Berget, for execution before the end of July. The last year in which Oklahoma executed 10 or more prisoners was 1933.

International standards, reinforced by the world trend away from the death penalty, seek to restrict the scope of this ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment in those countries which still retain it, with a view to abolition. The leadership in Oklahoma is plainly working against this goal.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send faxes/telegrams/express/airmail letters in English or your own language, in your own words using the following as a guide:

- expressing sympathy for the relatives and friends of Rick Patterson;
- protesting at the planned execution of Roger Berget, and Oklahoma's use of the death penalty in general;
- noting increasing concern across the USA about the fairness and reliability of the country's capital justice system;
- noting that a majority of countries have abandoned the death penalty, and that by continuing to use it the USA is increasingly isolating itself and damaging its image abroad;
- appealing to the Governor to lead his state away from a punishment that is a symptom of a culture of violence, and not a solution to it;
- urging him to do all in his power to stop this execution and to support a moratorium on executions in Oklahoma.

APPEALS TO:

The Honourable Frank Keating
Governor of Oklahoma
State Capitol
Room 212, Oklahoma City
OK 73105, USA

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Fax: + 1 405 521 3353

Telegrams: Governor Keating, Oklahoma, USA

Salutation:Dear Governor

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

You may also write brief letters of concern (not more than 250 words) to:

"Your Views", *The Oklahoman*, PO Box 25125, Oklahoma City, OK 73125, USA

Faxes:+ 1 415 475 3183

Letters to The Editor, *Tulsa World*, 315 South Boulder Avenue, Tulsa, OK 74103,
USA

Faxes: + 1 918 581 8353

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.