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## **USA: Second federal execution in eight days as fairness is sacrificed for finality**

*The US government has sacrificed fairness for finality, Amnesty International said today as the USA carried out its second federal execution in eight days.*

*"Fresh from his charm offensive in Europe, President George Bush is back home allowing his country to violate once again international human rights standards," the organization added. "In doing so, he has further damaged the USA's international reputation and given its citizens less reason to feel confident in the administration of justice in their country."*

*The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights said in April that Juan Raul Garza's death sentence had been obtained in an "arbitrary and capricious manner" because of unfair evidence introduced by the government at the 1993 trial, and that his execution would be a "deliberate and egregious" violation of US obligations under international law. In an urgent communiqué sent to the US Government last Thursday, the Commission repeated its call for the execution to be halted and the death sentence commuted.*

*President Bush -- whose five-year governorship of Texas saw 152 executions there, many in violation of international standards -- denied clemency to Juan Garza yesterday.*

*"It is deeply troubling that the current US administration appears to believe in a policy of shoot now ask questions later," Amnesty International continued. "Attorney General John Ashcroft pushed for the execution to proceed while ordering studies into the racial and geographic disparities that characterize federal capital justice."*

*The issue of such disparities is particularly relevant in the case of Juan Garza, a Mexican-American prosecuted in a federal district in Texas, one of the*

few jurisdictions accounting for the vast majority of federal capital prosecutions.

“The US Government justifies the execution of Juan Garza on the grounds of his guilt,” Amnesty International said, recalling that this was one of President Bush’s criteria for allowing executions to go ahead when governor of Texas. “But guilt or innocence was not the issue here -- many people guilty of potentially capital federal crimes do not face death sentences. The evenhandedness of the system is what remains in doubt.”

“The question, still unanswered, is would Juan Garza have ended up in the Terre Haute lethal injection chamber if he had been white, or his crime had been committed in a different federal district?”

“Perhaps the studies now ordered by Attorney General Ashcroft will say that he would likely not have. That conclusion will come too late for Juan Garza and for justice.”

### **Background**

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and will continue to push for the USA to join the majority of countries which have turned their backs on this cruel, brutalizing, ineffective and dangerously unreliable policy of symbolic extermination.

The other execution scheduled for today -- that of Mexican national Gerardo Valdez in Oklahoma -- has been stayed for 30 days while the state governor considers violations of international law in the case and widespread calls for clemency, including from President Vicente Fox of Mexico.

Last week’s execution of Timothy McVeigh was the first federal execution in the USA since 1963. In 1963, some 10 countries had abolished the death penalty. Today, the number of countries that have abolished this punishment in law or practice has risen to some 108.

RealVideo: [Amnesty International's Rob Freer](#):

<http://tv.oneworld.net/amnesty/usadp.ram>

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