

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 300/00 (AMR 51/149/00, 28 September 2000) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Alabama)Geramie Hart, aged 17

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Geramie Hart's capital trial has been postponed, and is now scheduled to begin on 4 June 2001. His lawyers requested the postponement on 30 October in order to have more time to prepare. The trial had originally been scheduled to begin on that day.

At the hearing on 30 October, Circuit Judge Gloria Bahakel ruled that Jefferson County District Attorney's Office can seek the death penalty against Geramie Hart. His lawyers had filed a motion arguing that it would be unconstitutional and a violation of international law to permit the use of the death penalty against him, as he was only 16 years old at the time of the crime. The prosecutor opposed the motion, and argued that US Supreme Court precedent allows such use of the death penalty. He reportedly said that until the Supreme Court or the state legislature "tells me something different, I'd say its appropriate. That's the law".

Amnesty International's action has generated substantial attention in the local media in Birmingham, Alabama, where the hearing took place. For example, an article in the *Birmingham News* on 31 October noted the "massive" international letter-writing campaign to county and state officials, reported on the USA's international isolation on this issue, and noted that Alabama is second only to Texas in the use of the death penalty against child offenders.

**No further action is requested at present. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**