

PUBLIC

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Further information on EXTRA 79/00 (AMR 51/156/00, 20 October 2000) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Missouri) James W. Chambers, white, aged 48

James Chambers was executed in Missouri in the first few minutes of 15 November 2000. He was sentenced to death for the murder of Jerry Oestrick, who was killed during a bar dispute in May 1982.

Governor Roger Wilson denied clemency shortly before the execution. Darlene Chambers, who was married to James Chambers and had campaigned on his behalf for the past 18 years, pleaded in person with the governor on 13 November for her husband to be spared.

Witnessing the execution, Darlene Chambers became very distressed, weeping loudly and banging her hands and head on the glass separating the execution chamber from the witness area. She was admitted to hospital after the execution, and was reportedly unconscious for about 45 minutes.

In his final statement, James Chambers said: "I couldn't have ever been as lucky as I have to have such a loyal, dedicated wife who stuck by my side through hell and through the 18 years fighting this case. She has traveled a long, hard, agonizing journey. I can never express how much my wife means to me and how much I love her."

In an earlier telephone interview with the *Kansas City Star* newspaper, he had said: "I'd like to be remembered as a normal man, a husband with a wife I love more than anything in the world, not as a cold-blooded killer."

Relatives of Jerry Oestrick were present at the execution. During the execution, a voice shouted from the witness area: "Now you know how it feels".

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty unreservedly. Every death sentence is an affront to human dignity. Every execution is a symptom of, not a solution to, a culture of violence. Executions create more victims, often in the name of victims' rights.

James Chambers becomes the 77th prisoner to be executed in the USA this year and the 675th overall since the country resumed judicial killing in 1977.

No further action is required. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.