

# URGENT ACTION

## TWO MEN FACE EXECUTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Two executions by electric chair in South Carolina have been set over seven days, starting on 18 June 2021. The scheduling of these executions follows the enactment of a law on 14 May that changes South Carolina's death penalty, allowing for execution by electric chair or firing squad. These executions, if carried out, will end a 10-year hiatus in executions in South Carolina, and set the state against the US and global trends away from the death penalty. We demand for the Governor to call off the scheduled executions.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

*The Honourable Henry McMaster  
Governor of South Carolina*

*State House  
1100 Gervais Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201*

*Email: [webform](#)*

*(For international action-takers using the webform,  
you can use AI USA's address:*

*Amnesty International USA  
311 West. 43rd St. 7th Floor, New York, NY 10036 USA)*

*Dear Governor Henry McMaster,*

*I am writing to ask for your urgent intervention to halt the two scheduled executions in South Carolina, the first in a decade.*

*The USA death penalty is marked with arbitrariness, racial bias, and flawed legal representation - which are some of the common factors that have contributed to unreliable judicial decisions on life or death, including for people with severe mental and intellectual disabilities.*

*Following the recent achievement in Virginia, 23 states have now abolished the death penalty, with South Carolina being one of an additional 13 without any executions in 10 or more years. The resumption of executions in South Carolina would set the state against this progress.*

***Rather than focusing on the pursuit of a cruel punishment, I encourage you to do everything in your power to call off these executions, end the cycle of violence and implement much needed reforms that would address the root causes of crime.***

*Sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 14 May 2021, South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster signed into law revisions to the state's death penalty statute that allow those sentenced to die to choose between execution by firing squad or electric chair if lethal injection drugs are not available. The law was passed in response to the state's inability to secure the drugs necessary for lethal injection, as defined under the state execution protocols. The South Carolina Supreme Court soon after scheduled two executions on 18 and 25 June, respectively.

The new South Carolina law keeps lethal injection as the primary method of execution but states that if lethal injection is unavailable "then the manner of inflicting a death sentence must be by electrocution, unless the convicted person elects death by firing squad." The new law also maintains the provision that those under sentence of death must make their election within 14 days of their execution date "or it is waived." If the person sentenced to die does not make an election, the state's Department of Corrections will use electrocution to carry out the execution. The law previously made lethal injection the default form of execution if no choice was made. Both men were sentenced under the older version of the law that made lethal injection the default execution method, but reserved the choice for electrocution. According to media reports, the man scheduled to be executed on 18 June did not choose between electrocution or lethal injection, while the man scheduled to be executed on 25 June elected for lethal injection. The South Carolina Department of Corrections has not yet created a firing squad – so death by the 109-year-old electric chair is the only means of execution at this time.

The USA death penalty system is deeply flawed and arbitrary. There have been more than 1,500 executions in the USA since judicial killing resumed under revised statutes in 1977, yet research and individual cases have continuously shown that race, particularly of the murder victim, plays a role in who is sentenced to death. As of 7 June 2021, 185 people have been exonerated from death row since 1977. In numerous cases, prisoners have gone to their deaths despite serious doubts about the proceedings that led to their convictions, including without adequate legal representation. People with serious mental and intellectual disabilities have been subjected to the death penalty in violation of international law.

No executions have been carried out in the state of South Carolina since May 2011. As of June 2021, 23 US states have abolished the death penalty and 13 have not carried out executions in more than 10 years – including the State of South Carolina. Figures on 2020 executions and death sentences in the USA represented the second lowest yearly totals recorded in 29 and 49 years, respectively. If these executions move forward, they would be just the second and third executions to be carried out at the state level in 2021. The Trump administration previously executed 3 individuals (2 men and 1 woman) at the federal level in January 2021.

As of today, more than two-thirds of all countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence, or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. The organization campaigns for total abolition of the death penalty.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** English.

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 25 June 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Two men face execution in South Carolina (them, they, theirs)

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** n/a