

# URGENT ACTION

## MISSISSIPPI EXECUTES MAN, AGED 79, FOR 1976 CRIME

Richard Jordan, aged 79, was executed by lethal injection in Mississippi on the evening of 25 June 2025. He was convicted of the murder of a woman committed in January 1976. His death sentence was reversed three times for constitutional errors. Experts concluded that he had combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder from his military service in the Vietnam War. Final appeals to the courts were rejected. The Governor denied clemency.

### NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Richard Jordan was first brought to trial and sentenced to death in 1976 under Mississippi's 1974 capital statute which provided for a mandatory death sentence for anyone convicted of capital murder. This law was ruled unconstitutional by the Mississippi Supreme Court in the wake of the US Supreme Court's July 1976 ruling invalidating mandatory capital sentencing schemes. Richard Jordan was re-tried in 1977 under a new law and again sentenced to death. This death sentence was overturned, as was another passed in 1983, before Richard Jordan was given a death sentence in 1998 that has now been carried out.

In 1978, the Mississippi Supreme Court had rejected the claim that Richard Jordan's 1977 death sentence violated the US Constitution's Ex Post Facto clause – banning ex post facto (retrospective) laws. The lawyers argued that the only constitutional sentence for murder, of any classification, in Mississippi at the time of the January 1976 crime had been life imprisonment. The state Supreme Court however ruled that the changes to the state's law in 1976 to provide for a death penalty that was constitutional "affected procedure and not substance". In rulings on other cases in 2023 and 2024, however, the state Supreme Court, in the words of Richard Jordan's lawyers revisiting the 1978 ruling, "upset over forty years of settled precedent, overturned more than fifteen hundred cases, and transformed the way the Court understands concepts of separation of powers and substantive law". As a result "now in Mississippi, everything that was procedural is now substantive law". In the light of this, the lawyers argued that the 1978 state Supreme Court ruling rejecting the ex post facto claim had been based on faulty reasoning. In May 2025, the Mississippi Supreme Court ruled that the claim was barred by the passage of time and restrictions on successive appeals, with one of the judges disagreeing. The lawyers appealed for a rehearing; this was denied on 12 June 2025, over the dissent of the same judge. Richard Jordan appealed to the US Supreme Court to review the ex post facto claim. The Supreme Court dismissed the petition without comment on 25 June 2025.

A challenge to the constitutionality of the Mississippi lethal injection protocol was denied by the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit on 24 June 2025. Since July 2022, Mississippi law has authorized four methods of execution – lethal injection, nitrogen hypoxia, electrocution, and firing squad – and allows correction officials to choose their "preferred" method. For lethal injection, the current "preferred" method, the execution team injects three drugs – an anaesthetic, a chemical paralytic, and a third drug to stop the heart. Noting that the US Supreme Court has said that "last-minute stays" of execution "should be the extreme exception" and has never held any method of execution unconstitutionally "cruel and unusual", the Fifth Circuit panel declined to issue a stay of execution. On 25 June, the US Supreme Court refused to intervene.

Governor Tate Reeves took to Facebook to explain that "I've been repeatedly asked this week by the press and others" about Richard Jordan's upcoming execution, and "want to be clear to my fellow Mississippians where things stand," He stated that he had reviewed the clemency petition but said that the execution "will proceed as scheduled". He concluded that "Justice must be done - and in Mississippi - justice will be done." The execution went ahead shortly after 6pm local time.

In a statement, his lawyers noted that Richard Jordan had "received Tier Worker status in prison, a position of trust given to inmates who have shown good behavior and no record violation reports for a long period of time. Richard was a mentor to other inmates and known for lessening conflicts among his peers." They concluded that "Richard spent every day trying to make up for his crime. Until his last day, he sought only to help others".

Mississippi accounts for 24 of the USA's 1,632 executions since 1976. There have been 25 executions this year, by lethal injection, nitrogen gas, and firing squad. The executions have been in 10 states (Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas). Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases unconditionally.

**NAME:** Richard Jordan

**THIS IS THE FIRST AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 60/25**

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/9492/2025/en/>

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