

EXTRA 17/01

Death pen**USA (Delaware)David F Dawson, white, aged 45**

David Dawson is scheduled to be executed in Delaware on 9 March 2001 for the murder of Madeline Kisner during a burglary of her home in December 1986.

David Dawson was sentenced to death in June 1988. In March 1992, the US Supreme Court overturned the death sentence because of the admission of irrelevant and prejudicial evidence at the trial. After a new sentencing hearing, he was again sentenced to death.

David Dawson has learned to read and write on death row. He is said to be remorseful and to have sought the forgiveness of the Kisner family.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases. Every death sentence is an affront to human dignity; every execution a symptom of a culture of violence. The death penalty denies the possibility of rehabilitation as well as rejecting the ever present risk of fatal error in capital justice systems.

The USA has executed 697 men and women since resuming judicial killing in 1977, frequently violating international human rights safeguards in its pursuit of death sentences (see Amnesty International News Release, *USA: Flouting world trends, violating international standards - 700th execution imminent*, AMR 51/031/2001, 1 March 2001).

In relation to its population, the small state of Delaware has the USA's highest rate of execution. It also has one of the highest per capita rates of death sentencing in the country. It has executed 11 prisoners since resuming executions in 1992. There are currently 17 prisoners on death row, nine (53 per cent) of them black in a state whose population is 17 per cent African American and 80 per cent white.

In Delaware, the Governor has the authority to grant clemency on the advice of the Board of Pardons. The Governor needs a favorable recommendation from the board in order to grant clemency, but does not have to go along with the recommendation.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language, IN YOUR OWN WORDS:

- expressing sympathy for the family and friends of Madeline Kisner, and explaining that you are not seeking to condone her murder;
- opposing the execution of David Dawson;
- calling for clemency;
- urging the Board and the Governor to support a moratorium on executions in Delaware.

APPEALS TO:

Pardon and Parole Board
820 N French Street
5th Floor Carvell Office Building
Wilmington, DE 19801

Fax: + 1 302 739 3811 or 302 577 2694 or 302-577-3501
Salutation:Dear Board Members

Governor Ruth Ann Minner
820 N French Street
Wilmington, DE 19801
Phone: + 1 302-577-3210
Fax: + 1 302-577-3118
E-mail: gminner@state.de.us
Salutation:Dear Governor

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

You may also write brief letters of concern (not more than 250 words) to:

Letters to the Editor
The News Journal
Box 15505
Wilmington, DE 19850, USA
Fax: + 1 302 324 2595
E-mail: <http://www.delawareonline.com/newsjournal/opinion/index.html>

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.