

PUBLIC

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**Further information on UA 105/99 (AMR 51/77/99, 12 May 1999) and follow-ups (AMR 51/98/99, 17 June 1999 and AMR 51/204/99, 13 December 1999) - Death Penalty / Legal Concern**

**USA (Virginia) Douglas Christopher Thomas, aged 26**

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Douglas Christopher Thomas was executed in Virginia on 10 January 2000, at 9pm local time, for a crime committed when he was aged 17. International law bans the use of the death penalty against people convicted of crimes committed when they were under 18 years old.

Chris Thomas was convicted in 1991 of the 1990 murders of James Wiseman and Kathy Wiseman, the parents of his 14-year-old girlfriend Jessica Wiseman. He received a 65-year prison sentence for the murder of James Wiseman, and was sentenced to death for the murder of Kathy Wiseman.

Chris Thomas consistently maintained that he had not fired the final shot which killed Kathy Wiseman. Shortly before the execution, a woman who had allegedly been held in juvenile detention with Jessica Wiseman after the murders came forward and said that Jessica Wiseman had admitted to shooting her mother. In June 1999, two other women had come forward to allege the same thing (see previous update). Jessica Wiseman was released from detention in 1997, when she turned 21. She denies killing her mother.

On 10 January, the US Supreme Court refused to consider an appeal based on international law banning the use of the death penalty against child offenders -- those who commit crimes when under aged 18. Governor Gilmore then denied clemency, reportedly stating that "in a society where the incidence of youth violence has increased, we must continue to demand complete accountability for such terrible crimes".

Chris Thomas becomes the fifth child offender known to have been executed in the world since October 1997. All five were executed in the USA. Since 1990, the USA has executed more child offenders (11) than the rest of the world combined (nine).

Two other child offenders are scheduled for execution in the USA in January -- Steve Roach in Virginia on 13 January, and Glen McGinnis in Texas on 25 January. Both are the subject of UA appeals. For more information, see *Shame in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Three child offenders scheduled for execution in January 2000* (AMR 51/189/99, December 1999).

Chris Thomas also becomes the third inmate executed in the USA in 2000, and the 601<sup>st</sup> prisoner executed in the country since it resumed judicial killing in 1977.

**No further action by the UA Network is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**