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Further information on EXTRA 46/00 (AMR 51/66/00, 4 May 2000) and follow-up (AMR 51/82/00, 25 May) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Oklahoma) James Glenn Robedeaux, Native American, aged 51

James Robedeaux was executed in Oklahoma in the first few minutes of 1 June 2000. He was sentenced to death in 1986 for the 1985 murder of Nancy McKinney.

In statements issued a few hours before the execution, Nancy McKinney's relatives thanked the state Pardon and Parole Board for rejecting clemency and allowing the execution to go ahead. According to reports, Nancy McKinney's mother wrote: "I feel that any person not wanting a killer's death sentence carried out is like an accomplice to the crime. They are upholding and enabling murders." The local media reported that Nancy McKinney's daughter wrote, "I have waited for this moment for so long. It would be nice if I could have popcorn and maybe something to drink while I watch this maggot die." About a dozen relatives of Nancy McKinney witnessed the execution of James Robedeaux.

The death penalty is a symptom of, not a solution to, a culture of violence. In unconditionally opposing judicial killing, Amnesty International does not condone violent crime, and has the greatest sympathy for the victims of such crime and their families. It is concerned, however, by the brutalizing effects of the death penalty, and the degree to which the state uses victims' relatives to achieve and justify executions. In his 1998 report on the USA, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions expressed his particular concern about the current approach to victims' rights in US death penalty cases. He stated that "while victims are entitled to respect and compassion, access to justice and prompt redress, these rights should not be implemented at the expense of those of the accused. Courts should not become a forum for retaliation. The duty of the State to provide justice should not be privatized and brought back to victims, as it was before the emergence of modern States." For more information, see pages 47-51 of *Failing the Future: Death Penalty Developments, March 1998 - March 2000* (AMR 51/03/00, April 2000).

James Robedeaux becomes the seventh prisoner to be executed in Oklahoma this year. Only Texas has executed more. This was the 40th execution in the USA this year and the 638th since executions resumed in the United States in 1977.

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