

USA (SOUTH CAROLINA) Larry GILBERT, black
J.D. GLEATON, black
Louis Joe TRUESDALE, black
Andrew Lavern SMITH, black

As the relentless pace of judicial killing in the USA continues, four men are scheduled for execution in South Carolina in December 1998, the month of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Amnesty International believes that these executions, like all others, serve only to entrench cycles of violence in society and that they insult the universal standards of human dignity proclaimed in the UDHR.

Half-brothers Larry Gilbert and JD Gleaton are scheduled to be executed on 4 December. They were sentenced to death in 1977 for robbing and killing petrol station owner, Ralph Stoudemire.

Louis Truesdale's execution date has been set for 11 December. He was convicted of kidnapping, raping and killing 18-year-old Rebecca Ann Eudy in 1980.

Andrew Lavern Smith was sentenced to death for the murder of an elderly couple, Christy and Corrie Johnson, during a robbery at their home in 1983. He is scheduled to die on 18 December.

The Attorney General's Office originally applied to have all four executions (and two others now scheduled for January next year) carried out on the same day. When scheduling the executions, the state Supreme Court said, however, that five or six executions on one day would place an undue burden on the officials carrying out the killings. Amnesty International believes that any execution is a dehumanizing act.

Sixteen prisoners have been executed in South Carolina since executions resumed in the state in 1985. Twelve of them have been put to death since 1994, when Charlie Condon became Attorney General. In November this year, a few days after being re-elected to the post, he reportedly said: "Justice demands that the sentences be carried out. I've made it a priority that appeals be speeded up in capital cases."

The method of execution in South Carolina is lethal injection, although those sentenced to death before 1995 can choose between electrocution and lethal injection. Three people have already been executed in the state this year, most recently Sammy Roberts, white, on 25 September.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A total of 490 men and women have been put to death in the USA since executions resumed there in 1977.

The capital justice system has consistently been shown to be prone to class and race bias - those sentenced to die being overwhelmingly poor and from ethnic and racial minority communities. For example, blacks make up 12 per cent of the US population, but account for 42 per cent of the 3,500 people currently on death row nationwide. In South Carolina, a state whose population

is 30 per cent black, the majority (12) of the 16 executed since 1985 have been white, but blacks make up 55 per cent of those currently on death row.

Jim Hodges, the newly elected Governor of South Carolina, is due to take office on 13 January 1999. The clemency decision on the four prisoners named above will therefore be taken by the current governor, David Beasley.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- urging that the death sentences of Larry Gilbert, JD Gleaton, Louis Joe Truesdale and Andrew Lavern Smith be commuted to humane alternatives, as would benefit a country which repeatedly claims to be a progressive force for human rights in the world;
- explaining that the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the USA played a leading role in drafting, represents an opportune moment for US state authorities to join the majority of the world's countries in turning away from the death penalty;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of violent crime and their families, but pointing out that an increasing number of relatives of murder victims in the USA are recognizing that the death penalty does nothing to help them come to terms with their loss, but only compounds the violence in society.

APPEALS TO:

The Honorable David Beasley
PO Box 11369
Columbia, SC 29211, USA

Telegrams: Governor Beasley, Columbia, South Carolina, USA
Telephone: + 1 803 734 9818
Faxes: + 1 803 734 1598
Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

The Honourable Charles Condon
Office of the Attorney General
Rembert Dennis Office Bldg., PO Box 11549
Columbia, SC 29211-1549, USA.

Faxes: + 1 803 253 6283

The Post and Courier, 134 Columbus St, Charleston, SC 29403-4800, USA.

Faxes: + 1 803 937 5579

Greenville News, 305 South Main Street, PO Box 1688, Greenville, SC 29602-1688, USA.

Faxes: + 1 864 298 4395

State Record, 1401 Shop Rd, PO Box 1333 Columbia, SC 29201, USA.

Faxes: + 1 803 771 8430

and to diplomatic representatives of USA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.

"Everyone has the right to life..."

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment"

Articles 3 and 5, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>