

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 64/97

Death Penalty

2 May 1997

USA (OREGON)

Harry MOORE

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Harry Moore, white, is scheduled to be executed in Oregon on 16 May 1997. Moore was sentenced to death on 16 July 1993 for the murders of his parents-in-law. He has chosen to abandon his legal appeals and allow the state to carry out his execution. If the execution is carried out, Harry Moore will be the second person to consent to his own execution in Oregon in the past year.

According to information received, Harry Moore stated that he had killed his parents-in-law because he feared they would take his wife and infant daughter to Las Vegas where the child might fall into a life of drugs and prostitution. His attorneys argued that Harry Moore had acted through extreme emotional disturbance. Two psychiatrists who examined Moore determined that he met the legal standard for sanity. However, reports received by Amnesty International indicate that Harry Moore is clearly delusional, claiming to have been an FBI informer and a KGB agent who spent two months in Russia and also a child movie star. According to a prison official, "... by death row standards, he is a model inmate and poses no threat to security and custody operations."

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty unconditionally as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel and degrading punishment as proclaimed in Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The execution of prisoners who have chosen to abandon their appeals, and allow the state to execute them, is no less a gross human rights violation than any other execution. The fact that an individual makes such a choice does not relieve the state of its responsibility in taking the life of its citizens

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

As of July 1996 there were 21 prisoners on death row in Oregon. The most recent execution in Oregon was Douglas Wright, white, on 6 September 1996. Before the execution of Douglas Wright there had been no executions in Oregon in almost 34 years. The death penalty was reinstated in 1984. The method of execution in Oregon is lethal injection.

In Oregon, the Governor has the power to grant reprieves, pardons or commutations. According to press reports, the Governor of Oregon, John Kitzhaber, is personally and philosophically opposed to the death penalty.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please make urgent appeals to Governor Kitzhaber, by telephone, fax, telegram, e-mail or express/airmail letters in English, including some or all of the following:**

- expressing concern that Harry Moore is scheduled to be executed in Oregon on 16 May 1997;
- acknowledging the seriousness of the crimes for which he was convicted and expressing sympathy for the victims of violent crime and their families;
- stating opposition to the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments;\*
- urging Governor Kitzhaber to commute Harry Moore's death sentence;
- urging that, as a minimum measure, Harry Moore be granted a stay of execution to allow him time to reconsider his decision not to pursue the many avenues of legal appeals still left open to him;
- citing arguments against the death penalty: for example, that detailed research has shown that in the USA, the death penalty is imposed in an arbitrary and racist manner on the poor, on ethnic minorities, the mentally ill or retarded

and those who have not had adequate legal representation at trial; that the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than any other punishment; that execution is irrevocable and despite the most stringent judicial safeguards, can be inflicted on the innocent;\*

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: if possible, please also write letters to the press:**

- acknowledging the seriousness of the crimes for which Harry Moore was convicted and expressing sympathy for the victims of violent crime and their families;
- stating, however, your opposition to the death penalty and citing arguments against it (see points marked \* above);

**APPEALS TO:**

State Governor

Governor John Kitzhaber

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**Salutation: Dear Governor**

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**LETTERS TO THE PRESS:**

*The Oregonian* and/or *The Statesman Journal*

and to diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**