

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 100/95

Death Penalty

5 September 1995

USA (Pennsylvania) Frederic Jermyn

Frederic Jermyn, white, is scheduled to be executed in Pennsylvania on 12 September 1995. He was sentenced to death in 1986 for the murder of his mother.

According to information received by Amnesty International, Frederic Jermyn was an abused child and is a veteran of the Vietnam war from which he was discharged for psychiatric reasons. He apparently has a twenty-year history of chronic paranoid schizophrenia, is delusional and has auditory hallucinations. Frederic Jermyn is apparently unable to help his attorney or sign any legal paper or participate in efforts to help him although he does not profess the desire to be executed. He believes that his mother is still alive and his execution warrant is not valid as he believes Acting Governor Mark Singel is dead.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 2 May 1995, Pennsylvania carried out its first execution in 33 years. A second prisoner, Leon Moser, was executed on 16 August 1995. Governor Tom Ridge, who took office in January 1995 is an adamant supporter of the death penalty, and during his campaign for office, pledged to review death penalty cases and sign warrants quickly. Shortly after he took office, Governor Ridge signed legislation which requires the governor of Pennsylvania to sign death warrants within 90 days after the State Supreme Court upholds the death penalty. A similar measure was vetoed by the previous governor, who signed 21 warrants during his eight years in office. Governor Ridge has signed at least 19 warrants since February.

In Pennsylvania, the state governor may only grant clemency on the recommendation of the five-member State Board of Pardons; he may, however, grant a reprieve. As of 30 April 1995, there were 186 prisoners under sentence of death in Pennsylvania, the fourth largest death row in the USA. The Board of Pardons comprises Pennsylvania's Attorney General and Lieutenant Governor, a prison-warder, a doctor and an attorney. The involvement of the Attorney General in Pennsylvania's clemency decision-making process has been criticised on the grounds that the Attorney General, as the person in charge of prosecuting cases on appeal, is not an objective party.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel or degrading punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please make telephone calls/send telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

To the Board of Pardons:

- urging the Board to recommend to Governor Ridge that he grant clemency to Frederic Jermyn;

To Governor Ridge and the Board of Pardons:

- expressing concern that Frederic Jermyn is scheduled to be executed in Pennsylvania;
- expressing concern at reports of his serious mental health problems;

- expressing your unconditional opposition to the death penalty, while at the same time expressing sympathy for the families and friends of the victims of violent crime;
- referring to arguments against the death penalty (for example, its brutalizing effect on all those involved in the process; the fact that it has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments; the fact that it is arbitrary and often falls disproportionately on minority and underprivileged groups);

To Governor Ridge:

- urging Governor Ridge to take all appropriate steps within his power to prevent the execution of Frederic Jermyn.

APPEALS TO:

Pennsylvania Board of Pardons

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333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-2596
USA

Telephone: +1 717 787 2596

Telegrams: Board of Pardons, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA

Faxes: +1 717 772 3135

Salutation: Dear Board Members

The Honorable Tom Ridge

Governor of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120
USA

Telephone: + 717 787 2500

Telegrams: Governor Ridge, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA

Faxes: +1 717 772 3155

Salutation: Dear Governor

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and to diplomatic representatives of USA (Pennsylvania) accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.