

PUBLIC

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**Further information on UA 292/98 (AMR 51/93/98, 10 November 1998) and follow-ups (AMR 51/100/98, 1 December 1998 and AMR 51/105/98, 10 December, and AMR 51/113/98, 18 December)- Death Penalty / Prison Conditions**

**USA (Oklahoma)**

**John Walter CASTRO, aged 37, Native American**

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John Walter Castro was executed, as scheduled, just after midnight on 7 January 1999 for the murder of Beulah Cox in April 1983. He had also been convicted in a separate trial of the killing, three months later, of Rhonda Pappan. His death sentence for the second murder was later overturned. Relatives of both victims asked to attend the execution.

According to reports, before the execution began, John Castro turned to look towards a witness room where relatives of his victims were watching and said, "I don't who's behind that one-way glass but whoever is here from the Cox family, I am sorry for what I did. And anybody who is here from the Pappan family I am sorry. For the people who are here for me, thank you."

John Castro also made mention of Sean Sellers, 29, who faces execution on 4 February 1999 in Oklahoma for crimes committed at 16. For information on Sean Sellers see UA 305/98, AMR 51/101/98, 3 December 1998 and *Killing Hope: The Imminent Execution of Sean Sellers*, AMR 51/108/98, December 1998.

"My son wanted to be here," John Castro said. "They say he can't because he's 16 and that's too young to witness an execution. If that is so, why can the state of Oklahoma convict, sentence to death and execute a 16-year-old child. I just don't understand."

The Oklahoma Pardon and Parole Board had met on 21 December 1998 and voted 4-0 against clemency for John Castro. One board member was absent. The Attorney General was present at the hearing, having arrived with about 15 to 20 relatives of John Castro's victims' families. An Assistant Attorney General spoke against clemency. According to information received by Amnesty International, a few minutes before the proceedings began, the Board's Chairman was handed a large sealed envelope. He opened the envelope and took out John Castro's clemency package. However, he allegedly did not look at its contents before voting that John Castro should die.

John Castro becomes the 502nd prisoner to be executed in the USA since judicial killing resumed there in 1977, and the 14th in Oklahoma since executions resumed in the state in 1990. He was the second prisoner executed in 1999. John Glenn Moody was put to death in Texas on 5 January.

No further action is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.