

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 30/09 (AMR 51/017/2009, 09 February 2009 – Death penalty/Legal concern

USA (Ohio) Jeffrey D. Hill (m), black, aged 44

Ohio Governor Ted Strickland granted clemency to Jeffrey Hill on 12 February. He had been due to be executed on 3 March. Jeffrey Hill was sentenced to death in 1992 for the murder of his mother, Emma Hill, in 1991.

The state parole board had made a non-binding recommendation to Governor Strickland on 6 February, that he should commute Jeffrey Hill's death sentence to life imprisonment with parole eligibility after 25 years. The Board voted unanimously that clemency was warranted for a number of reasons. It stated that Emma Hill's family had "suffered tremendous loss, and execution would add further to their suffering." It pointed to the "minimal mitigation preparation and presentation" by Jeffrey Hill's trial lawyers, which it said "should not be tolerated as acceptable conduct by counsel in a case where the death penalty is a potential sentence." It noted the "genuine remorse" shown by Jeffrey Hill "to many who have come in contact with him," including the Parole Board. It also concluded that the death sentence was "disproportionate to other sentences imposed in matricides and patricides where offenders receive life sentences. Similar offenders with often more heinous offenses have received life sentences with parole eligibility."

In a statement issued on 12 February, Governor Strickland said that, based on his review of the case, including judicial decisions, arguments for and against clemency, and letters and petitions received in the Governor's office, "I concur with the rationale and recommendation of the Ohio Parole Board and have, therefore, decided to commute Mr. Hill's sentence to a term of from 25 years to life." Jeffrey Hill will be eligible for parole in 2017.

Responding to the clemency decision, Emma Hill's younger brother said: "Our family's prayers have finally been answered, and we are so grateful to Governor Strickland, the parole board, and all of Jeffrey's supporters for giving him a second chance at life. The Governor's actions today not only respect our wishes, but they also honour the memory of my beloved sister and Jeffrey's mother, Emma Dee Hill, who believed in the power of redemption and the value of all life."

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