

PUBLIC

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Further information on EXTRA 57/01 (AMR 51/125/2001, 21 August 2001) and updates (AMR 51/137/2001, 18 September 2001; AMR 51/148/2001, 11 October 2001; AMR 51/016/2002, 23 January 2002) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Ohio) John Byrd (m), white, aged 38

John Byrd was executed on 19 February in Ohio for the 1983 murder of Monte Tewksbury. He was convicted on the basis of the disputed testimony of a jailhouse informant. His co-defendant, who is serving a life prison sentence, repeatedly stated that it was he, not Byrd, who had killed Monte Tewksbury.

In his final statement, John Byrd said: "What you are witnessing, for whosoever is here for this state-sanctioned murder, a cowardice way of hiding behind the state seal, you don't know what you're doing. I'd like to tell my family that I love them and stay strong, and to tell my immediate family that I love them. My brother, that I love him and my sister, that we fought hard."

In her statement, Ohio's Attorney General said: "My thoughts and prayers go out to the Tewksbury family. Their long wait is finally over. My thoughts and prayers also go out to the family and supporters of John Byrd. The judicial process has worked, however slowly. Monte Tewksbury has now received some measure of justice."

While Amnesty International opposed John Byrd's execution unconditionally, it also considers that his execution violated the UN Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death Penalty, which states: "Capital punishment may be imposed only when the guilt of the person charged is based upon clear and convincing evidence leaving no room for an alternative explanation of the facts".

John Byrd becomes the 11th person to be executed in the USA this year, and the 760th nationwide since the USA resumed executions in 1977. This was the third execution in Ohio in that period.

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