

PUBLIC

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Further information on EXTRA 14/01 (AMR 51/026/2001, 15 February 2001)- Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (North Carolina)Willie Ervin Fisher, black, aged 38

Willie Fisher was executed on the evening of 9 March, about 19 hours after he was originally scheduled to be put to death. He had been sentenced to death for the 1992 murder of Angela Johnson.

A judge issued a stay of execution less than three hours before the execution, scheduled for 2am on 9 March. The stay was issued on the grounds that Governor Michael Easley - who earlier in the day had denied clemency - might have had a conflict of interest because as former Attorney General he opposed Fisher's earlier appeals in the courts.

The North Carolina Supreme Court lifted the stay at about 4.45am. On the afternoon of 9 March, the US Supreme Court rejected the final appeal for a stay and Willie Fisher was executed by lethal injection a few hours later.

In his statement denying clemency, Governor Easley stated: "After a careful review of this case, I conclude that the jury's recommendation of death is attributable to the heinous nature of this crime without regard to any other factor. This brutal murder left two young children motherless and devastated an entire family. Like every court that has reviewed this matter, I see no reason to overturn the jury's recommendation."

In a videotape presented to the governor as part of the petition for clemency, Willie Fisher spoke of his remorse and apologised to Angela Johnson's family.

Willie Fisher becomes the 18th person to be executed in the USA this year, and the 701st since the USA resumed executions in 1977.

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