

EXTRA 45/99

Death Penalty / Legal Concern

16 March 1999

USA (Pennsylvania)                      Antuan BRONSHTEIN, aged 28, Moldovan national

Antuan Bronshtein is scheduled to be executed in Pennsylvania on 8 April 1999. He has a history of mental and emotional problems, including suicidal tendencies, and has given up his appeals against his death sentence.

He was sentenced to death on 10 August 1994 for the murder of jewellery shop owner Alexander Gutman in Valley Forge, Montgomery County, in 1991.

Antuan Bronshtein came to the USA when he was seven, from the Republic of Moldova, then part of the Soviet Union. As a foreign national, he should have been informed after his arrest of his right to contact his consulate under Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, ratified by the USA in 1969. However, to date the authorities in Moldova have not been officially informed of his arrest, trial, conviction or sentence. Moldova was the first former Soviet state to fully abolish the death penalty, in 1995.

Access to the resources of a consulate can be vital to a foreign national facing a US capital trial, whose outcome can be seriously influenced by the quality of legal representation and money available to mount a defence. In Antuan Bronshtein's case, such resources could have been important in ensuring effective defence counsel and developing mitigating evidence, including the extent of his mental health problems.

Antuan Bronshtein was reportedly using heroin, cocaine and marijuana by the age of 11. Since the age of 16 he has been diagnosed with various mental conditions, including borderline personality disorder, paranoid personality disorder and depression. His depression has deepened on death row. He is believed to have been suicidal for some time, and is reported to have recently attempted to slash his own throat.

The execution of Antuan Bronshtein, who is Jewish, is scheduled to take place on the last day of Passover (*Pesach*), an eight-day Jewish festival.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

There are more than 70 foreign nationals on death row in the USA, most of whom were denied their Vienna Convention rights. Three such prisoners have already been executed this year: Jaturun Siripongs, a Thai national, was executed in California on 9 February, and German nationals Karl LaGrand and his brother Walter were put to death in Arizona on 24 February and 3 March respectively. US officials ignored appeals from the Thai and German governments, and in the case of the LaGrands also ignored a request by the International Court of Justice that the executions should be stayed.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, believing that every death sentence is an affront to human dignity, and that every execution, with its message that killing is an appropriate response to killing, only serves to compound the violence in society. The fact that a prisoner gives up appeals against execution does not absolve the state of its responsibility for this human rights violation. Such a decision taken by an inmate under sentence of death can never be said to have been a free choice. Pennsylvania has executed two prisoners since the USA resumed executions in 1977. Both had given up their appeals.

While more than half the countries of the world have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, the USA continues to relentlessly pursue this punishment, in many cases in violation of international standards. The last person to be executed was Roy Roberts in Missouri on 10 March 1999, the 25<sup>th</sup> prisoner to be put to death nationwide this year and the 525<sup>th</sup> since the USA resumed executions in 1977.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

**To Governor Ridge:**

- opposing the execution of Antuan Bronshtein;
- noting that the prisoner, who suffers from mental health problems and suicidal tendencies, has given up his legal appeals;
- stating that such a decision by a prisoner does not absolve the state from its responsibility in this human rights violation;
- expressing concern that the State of Pennsylvania has ignored its obligations under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations in this case;
- urging that Antuan Bronshtein's death sentence be commuted to a more humane alternative.

**To Attorney General Reno and Secretary of State Albright:**

- expressing deep concern that another US death row prisoner denied his Vienna Convention rights is scheduled for execution;
- calling on the addressees to intervene to halt his execution.

**APPEALS TO:**

The Honorable Tom Ridge  
Main Capitol Building  
Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120, USA  
**Telegrams: Governor Ridge, Harrisburg, PA, USA**  
**Fax: +1 717 772 8284**  
**Salutation: Dear Governor**

The Honorable Janet Reno  
Attorney General  
Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W. Room 440  
Washington, DC 20530-0001, USA  
**Fax: +1 202 514 4371**  
**Telegrams: Attorney General Reno, Washington DC, USA**  
**Salutation: Dear Attorney General**

The Honorable Madeleine Albright  
Office of the Secretary of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20520, USA  
**Fax: +1 202 647 1533**  
**Telegrams: Secretary of State Albright, Washington DC, USA**  
**Salutation: Dear Secretary of State**

**You may also write to Antuan Bronshtein. He is depressed and has lost his will to live. Brief letters and cards expressing concern and encouragement may make all the difference.**

Mr Antuan Bronshtein  
BU-0261  
SCI Greene  
1040 East Roy Furman Highway  
Waynesburg  
PA 15370, USA

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**