

**EXTERNAL (for general distribution)**

**AI Index: AMR 51/55/91  
Distr: UA/SC**

**Further information on EXTRA 52/91 (AMR 51/28/91, 16 August) and follow-up  
AMR 51/30/91 (22 August) - Death Penalty**

**USA (Louisiana):                      Robert Sawyer**

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Robert Sawyer is scheduled to be executed in the state of Louisiana on 15 November 1991. Mr Sawyer, white, now aged 40, was sentenced to death on 16 October 1980 for the murder, committed in September 1979, of a white female. Three execution dates have been set for Mr Sawyer's execution during the past 13 months. This latest date is considered to be extremely serious. A clemency hearing will be held in Louisiana on 11 November 1991.

According to hospital records, at the age of 16, Mr Sawyer was diagnosed as being "moderately retarded" and suffering from chronic brain disorder. Mr Sawyer's present I.Q. is 68; a person of average intelligence has an I.Q. of 100. Mr Sawyer's mental retardation was discovered only recently after his case was taken up by a new attorney.

According to reports, Mr Sawyer grew up in a disturbed family environment. His mother tried several times to kill him and his twin sister while they were infants. She suffered from post-natal depression and was physically abused by Mr Sawyer's father. She took her own life while the twins were infants. Mr Sawyer's father apparently blamed the children for their mother's death.

This information was not made available to the jury at the sentencing phase of Mr Sawyer's trial because his trial lawyer allegedly made no investigation of his background. Consequently the jury was unable to take these factors into account in their determination of whether to impose a sentence of death or life imprisonment.

As of 23 August 1991 there were 36 prisoners under sentence of death in Louisiana. The method of execution in Louisiana was changed from electrocution to lethal injection on 1 January 1991; coming into effect after 15 September 1991. Andrew Lee Jones' execution on 22 July 1991 was the last to be carried out by electrocution in the state. Twenty prisoners have been executed under Louisiana's current death penalty statute since 1983.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/faxes/telephone calls/telexes/express letters:**

- urging Governor Roemer to grant clemency to Robert Sawyer by commuting his sentence of death;
- urging the Board of Pardons and Paroles to recommend that the Governor grant clemency to Robert Sawyer;
- expressing concern that the jury was not told of Mr Sawyer's history of mental illness/mental retardation and consequently was unable to take these factors into account in their determination of whether to sentence him to death.

**APPEALS TO**

1 The Honourable Charles Roemer  
Governor of Louisiana  
PO Box 94004  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804  
USA

**Faxes: + (504) 342 0909**  
**Telephone: + (504) 342 7015**  
**Telex: 0255 1099 33256**  
**Telegrams: Governor Roemer, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804, USA**

2 Louisiana Board of Pardons and Paroles  
504 Mayflower Street  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802  
USA

**Faxes: + (504) 342 6593**  
**Telephone: + (504) 342 5421**  
**Telegrams: Louisiana Pardons Board, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA**

**COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of the USA in your country.**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY, TO ARRIVE AT THE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES BY 11 NOVEMBER 1991; AND TO THE GOVERNOR BEFORE 15 NOVEMBER 1991.**