

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 46/92

Death Penalty

24 April 1992

USA (Arkansas):

Stephen Douglas HILL, white

Stephen Hill is scheduled to be executed by the state of Arkansas, USA, on 7 May 1992.

Stephen Hill, now aged 25, was sentenced to death in March 1985 for the murder, of Robbie Klein, a police officer, in October 1984. He was 18 years old at the time of the crime. A co-defendant was sentenced to 86 years' imprisonment.

In July 1988 a stay of execution was granted to Hill after the co-defendant insisted that he, not Hill, had killed Klein. However, an attempt by Hill to obtain a new trial on these grounds was unsuccessful. All legal appeals are now exhausted and it is feared the execution will be carried out as scheduled.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At the beginning of 1992, there were 35 prisoners under sentence of death in Arkansas. The method of execution is either electrocution or lethal injection. Three prisoners have been executed in Arkansas since June 1990, when executions resumed in the state after a period of 26 years. The most recent person to be executed was Ricky Rector on 24 January 1992. He was severely mentally impaired and the manner of his execution was extremely disturbing as technicians searched for almost an hour to find a suitable vein in which to inject the chemicals. Ricky Rector was apparently aware of the problem and was reported to have helped the execution team in their task. (See UA 10/92, AMR 51/06/92, 8 January and follow-up, AMR 51/16/92, 29 January 1992.)

The Governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton, has full clemency authority. However, all clemency applications are referred to the Board of Pardons and Paroles for investigation and recommendation. Bill Clinton is a Democratic candidate for President of the USA and supports the death penalty. The election will take place in November 1992.

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: Please telephone and send telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters:

To the Governor and the Board of Pardons and Paroles:

- urging them to grant clemency to Stephen Hill by commuting his death sentence;
- expressing concern at the disparity in the sentences which Stephen Hill and the co-defendant received, referring to the fact that the co-defendant, who

claimed to have played the major role in the crime, received 86 years' imprisonment, while Hill received the death sentence;
- referring to Hill's extreme youth at the time of the crime (NB: he was 18 years old, not technically a juvenile offender);
- urging that no further executions take place, particularly in light of Ricky Ray Rector's execution on 24 January 1992, the circumstances of which demonstrate the extreme cruelty of the death penalty.

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- To the Governor only (in addition to the above points):

- urging Governor Clinton, in his election campaign, to take a stand against the death penalty and to speak out in favour of alternative punishments more in keeping with the principles and values of a civilized society;
- referring to world trends towards the abolition of the death penalty and any relevant developments in your own country.

APPEALS TO

1) The Honorable Bill Clinton
Governor of Arkansas
250 State Capitol Building
Little Rock, AR 72201
USA

Telegrams: Governor Clinton, Little Rock, AR 72201, USA

Telephone: + 1 501 682 2345

Faxes: + 1 501 682 1382

[Salutation: Dear Governor]

2) Arkansas Board of Pardons and Paroles
PO Box 34085
Little Rock, AR 72203
USA

Telegrams: Board Pardons/Paroles, Little Rock, AR 72203, USA

Telephone: + 1 501 682 3850

Faxes: + 1 501 682 3860; + 501 247 9825

[Salutation: Dear Board Members]

COPIES TO:

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and to diplomatic representatives of the USA in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Please check with the International Secretariat, or your Section office, if sending appeals after 6 May 1992.