

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 61/99 (AMR 51/58/99, 1 April 1999) - Death Penalty

USA (CALIFORNIA)Manny BABBITT, Vietnam veteran

Amnesty International very much regrets the execution of Manny Babbitt as scheduled in California on 4 May 1999.

California's governor, Gray Davis, refused to save Manny Babbitt's life by granting him executive clemency. In a statement released on 30 April the Governor stated: "After due deliberation of the record and submitted materials, and the matters raised in those submissions, I am not persuaded that there is reason to overturn the jury's verdict. Countless people have suffered the ravages of war, persecution, starvation, natural disasters, personal calamities and the like. But such experiences cannot justify or mitigate the savage beating and killing of defenceless, law-abiding citizens."

Among the numerous bodies and individuals appealing to the Governor to spare Babbitt were the California Alliance for the Mentally Ill and the Black American Political Association of California, who expressed their fear that racism may have played a part in Babbitt's death sentence (Babbitt, black, was convicted and sentenced by an all-white jury).

Two of the jurors that sentenced Babbitt to death wrote letters for the clemency petition stating that they would not have voted for a death sentence had they had a complete picture of Babbitt's childhood and the effect the Vietnam war had upon him.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals on behalf of Manny Babbitt. Letters expressing regret at his execution may be sent to the addresses indicated in the original action.