

**USA (PENNSYLVANIA) Scott Blystone**

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Amnesty International fears that Scott Blystone, a death row prisoner at State Correctional Institution Greene (SCI Greene) in Waynesburgh, Pennsylvania, may be subjected to ill-treatment by prison guards.

Scott Blystone was one of two death row prisoners interviewed by an Amnesty International delegation, led by the organization's Secretary General, Pierre Sané, that visited the prison on 24 November 1997 (the other prisoner was Mumia Abu-Jamal). Scott Blystone brought notes to this meeting. However, very soon after the interview started the guards returned and informed Blystone that he was unauthorised to have notes in the interview room and removed the papers. Blystone immediately became upset, as the notes contained details of previous ill-treatment he had received at the hands of the guards and included names and dates. He told the delegation "I will pay for this. Say whatever you want - please help us."

Blystone told the delegation of the previous ill-treatment he had received at the hands of the prison authorities, which included physical assaults and threats to his life. He said that his wife had also been harassed when visiting Blystone. On one occasion a man claiming to be a prison guard telephoned her in her motel near the prison and told her that unless she had sexual intercourse with him, Scott Blystone would be abused by guards.

Blystone also told the delegation of the intense strain of being imprisoned under the sentence of death and described the process he underwent when they prepared him for execution in 1995: "They [the guards] come to your cell, you know you're getting a warrant because they're real polite. They handcuff you, belt you and shackle your feet. It's silent, you can hear your heart beating. They take you to death watch - cells surrounded by plexiglass walls so sound can't get through. There's a camera at the front of the cell that watches you 24-hours a day. You're standing there alive and they're asking you where to send your body. After surviving a death warrant I felt like I'd lost my soul - it kills part of you."

Pierre Sané, Secretary General, expressed the following concern: "the man I saw before me was alarmed and terrified at the prospect of a severe beating. I hope this urgent action will prevent further injury to him."

**Background Information**

SCI Greene is a super maximum security prison that holds 1,534 prisoners, including 107 of the 215 prisoners under sentence of death in Pennsylvania.

Amnesty International has received an increasing number of reports of ill-treatment by prison guards at SCI Greene. The allegations include beatings, prolonged periods in solitary confinement following fabricated disciplinary charges and the unauthorised removal or destruction of prisoners' property. To the organization's knowledge, no guards have been disciplined for the abuse of inmates.

SCI Greene is a recently constructed prison in a remote area of the state, 7 hours drive from Philadelphia. The remoteness of the prison makes visitations by relatives of inmates extremely difficult. On the day that

the delegation was there, no other visitors were present in the two visiting areas used by the delegation.

Pierre Sane described the prison in this way: "death row in Pennsylvania looks and feels like a morgue. Everything is high-tech, and there is no human being in sight. From the moment that condemned prisoners arrive, the state tries to kill them slowly, mechanically and deliberately - first spiritually, and then physically."

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

- expressing concern that Scott Blystone, a prisoner at SCI Greene, Waynesburgh, who recently told an Amnesty International delegation that he was ill-treated by guards, may be subjected to ill-treatment in retaliation for his allegations;
- asking what precautions are being taken to prevent Scott Blystone from being subjected to ill-treatment;
- expressing concern at the increasing reports received by Amnesty International of ill-treatment of prisoners in SCI-Greene;
- asking to be informed of any action taken by the prison authorities to prevent the ill-treatment of inmates by prison personnel;
- asking to be informed whether any disciplinary action has been taken against prison personnel in connection with previous allegations of ill-treatment;
- expressing concern that prisoners are prevented from taking handwritten notes to meetings with human rights activists.

**Appeals to**

Warden Ben Varner  
 State Correctional Institution - Greene  
 1040 East Ry Furman Highway  
 Waynesburgh  
 Pennsylvania  
 PA 15370

**Fax: +1 412 627 5660**

**Tel: +1 412 627 6185**

**Salutation: Dear Warden Varner**

**Copies to**

Commissioner Martin F Horn  
 Pennsylvania Department of Corrections  
 2520 Lisburn Road  
 PO Box 598  
 Camp Hill, PA 17001-0598  
 USA

**Fax: +1 717 787 1758**

and to diplomatic representatives of USA (Pennsylvania) accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 December 1997.