

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

**AI Index: AMR 51/87/95
Distr: UA/SC**

UA 145/95

Death Penalty

22 June 1995

USA (Pennsylvania)

**Scott Blystone
Ronald Logan
Leon Moser
Mumia Abu-Jamal**

Scott Blystone, Ronald Logan, Leon Moser and Mumia Abu-Jamal are scheduled to be executed in Pennsylvania on 25 July, 27 July, 15 August and 17 August 1995 respectively.

Scott Blystone, a Native American sentenced to death on 13 August 1984 for murder, reportedly has an extensive documented history of child abuse. He currently has no attorney to file his appeals.

Ronald Logan, black, was sentenced to death on 16 November 1982; according to information received, he had an extensive history of mental illness prior to the commission of the crime, and had been released from a psychiatric unit of a hospital 45 days prior to the crime. Logan has reportedly been committed 17 times to a mental hospital for the criminally insane since he has been on death row, the most recent time being March 1995.

Leon Moser, white, was sentenced to death on 24 January 1986 for the murder of his ex-wife and their two children. He is refusing to file appeals and will allow the state to carry out his execution.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, black, was sentenced to death in December 1992, after being convicted of the murder of a police officer in July 1982. Amnesty International has recently written to the Pennsylvania authorities raising its concerns that at the sentencing phase of his trial, the prosecutor referred to Mumia Abu-Jamal's past membership of the Black Panther Party in arguments to the jury which had to choose between a life or death sentence. Other concerns about aspects of Mumia Abu-Jamal's trial are the subject of a current *habeas corpus* petition to the federal courts. Mumia Abu-Jamal's lawyers are hopeful for a stay of execution, but at present, his scheduled date still stands.

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

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 2 May 1995, Pennsylvania carried out its first execution in 33 years. Governor Tom Ridge, who took office in January 1995, is an ardent supporter of the death penalty, and during his campaign for office pledged to review death penalty cases and sign warrants expeditiously. Governor Ridge recently signed legislation which requires the governor of Pennsylvania to sign death warrants within 90 days after the State Supreme Court upholds the death penalty.

A similar measure was vetoed by the previous governor, who signed 21 warrants during his eight years in office. Governor Ridge has signed at least 15 warrants since February.

In Pennsylvania, the state governor may only grant clemency on the recommendation of the five-member State Board of Pardons; he may, however, grant a reprieve. As of 30 April 1995, there were 186 prisoners under sentence

of death in Pennsylvania, the fourth largest in the USA. 112 of these prisoners are black.

The Board of pardons comprises Pennsylvania's Attorney General and Lieutenant Governor, a prison-warder, a doctor and an attorney. The involvement of the Attorney General in the state's clemency decision-making process has been criticised on the grounds that, as the person in charge of prosecuting cases on appeal, he or she is not an objective party.

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

Appeals to the Board of Pardons:

- urging the Board to recommend to Governor Ridge that he grant clemency to Robert Blystone, Ronald Logan, Leon Moser and Mumia Abu-Jamal;

Appeals to Governor Ridge and the Board of Pardons:

- urging Governor Ridge to take all appropriate steps within his power to prevent the executions of Robert Blystone, Ronald Logan, Leon Moser and Mumia Abu-Jamal;
- expressing your unconditional opposition to the death penalty, while at the same time expressing sympathy for the families and friends of the victims of violent crime;

- referring to arguments against the death penalty (for example, it is brutalizing to all who are involved in the process; it has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments; it is arbitrary and often falls disproportionately on minority and underprivileged groups);

In the case of Leon Moser

- Urging the Board to at the very least, recommend that Governor Ridge grant a stay of execution to allow him to reconsider whether to pursue the appeals left open to him;

In the case of Ronald Logan

- expressing concern at reports of Ronald Logan's serious mental health problems;

In the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal:

- expressing deep concern that reference to Mumia Abu-Jamal's purported political beliefs and statements made as a teenager - which had no direct bearing on the case - may have unjustly swayed the jury in its sentencing decision.

APPEALS TO:

Pennsylvania Board of Pardons
1st Floor
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-2596, USA

Telephone: +1 717 787 2596

Telegrams: Board of Pardons, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA

Faxes: +1 717 772 3135

Salutation: Dear Board Members

The Honorable Tom Ridge
Governor of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120, USA

Telephone: +1 717 787 2500

Telegrams: Governor Ridge, Pennsylvania, USA

Faxes: +1 717 772 3155

Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

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PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.