

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Penalty

9 November 1994

USA (Texas)

Samuel HAWKINS, aged 51

Samuel Hawkins is scheduled to be executed in Texas on 7 December 1994.

Samuel Hawkins, black, was sentenced to death for the rape and murder of a white woman and the murder of a young girl on separate occasions in 1977. He has been under sentence of death since March 1978. According to his attorney, testimony presented at trial indicated that Samuel Hawkins was suffering from mental problems at the time of the crimes.

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 or degrading punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at the number of executions being carried out in the USA in general, and in Texas in particular. Of the 253 executions carried out in the USA since the death penalty was resumed in the mid 1970s, 82 have been carried out in Texas.

In Texas the governor may commute a sentence of death only if she receives a favourable recommendation from the Board of Pardons and Paroles. The Board consistently refuses to hold full clemency hearings in death penalty cases, and apart from a number of commutations granted in the 1980s as the result of two key court rulings, the Board has never recommended clemency in any death penalty case in recent years.

As of 20 July 1994 there were 385 prisoners under sentence of death in Texas. The most recent person to be executed in Texas was Walter Williams, on 5 October 1994. The method of execution is lethal injection.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please telephone, or send telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters, in English if possible:

- expressing deep concern that Samuel Hawkins is scheduled to be executed on 7 December 1994 in Texas;
- urging the Board to recommend that Governor Richards grant clemency to Samuel Hawkins;
- citing arguments against the death penalty - for example, point out that detailed research in the USA and other countries has provided no evidence that the death penalty deters crime more effectively than other punishments; express concern that in the USA research studies show that the death penalty is imposed disproportionately on the poor, on minorities, on the mentally ill or retarded and those without adequate legal representation.

APPEALS TO

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles
Executive Clemency Unit
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Pardons and Paroles Division
PO Box 13401

Austin, TX 78711, USA

Faxes: + 1 512 467 0945

Telephone: +1 512 406 5852

Telegrams: Pardons & Paroles Board, Austin, Texas

Salutation: Dear Board Members

COPIES TO

The Honorable Ann Richards

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and to diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.