

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 174/99 (AMR 51/117/99, 23 July 1999) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Alabama) Gregory Wynn, aged 18

On 1 September 1999, the jury at Gregory Wynn's trial recommended that the teenager be sentenced to die in Alabama's electric chair.

The judge will sentence Greg Wynn at a hearing on 17 September. He has the option of accepting the jury's recommendation or overriding it and passing a sentence of life imprisonment without parole.

Greg Wynn's lawyer presented the international issues at a pre-trial hearing on 13 August, but her motion to stop the prosecution's pursuit of the death penalty under international law was denied by the judge, with almost no comment or discussion. However, because she raised it, it is now preserved as an issue that can be raised in Greg Wynn's appeals if he is sentenced to death on 17 September as expected.

The verdict phase of Greg Wynn's trial began on 25 August. On 31 August, the jury found him guilty of beating to death Denise Bliss at Hardee's fast food restaurant in Lenlock, Calhoun County, on 9 April 1998. Greg Wynn was 17 at the time of the killing.

At the penalty phase of the trial on 1 September, the defence argued against the death penalty by presenting mitigating evidence and testimony on Greg Wynn's behalf, including evidence of the serious physical abuse he allegedly suffered as a child. In her closing statement, the lawyer again referred to the USA's isolated stance in sentencing to death and executing child offenders: "Not old enough to vote. Not old enough to drink. We are the only western nation to impose the death penalty on juveniles." She went on to stress that every country, except Somalia and the USA, has agreed to the ban on the death penalty against child offenders (by ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).

The jury took just 56 minutes to unanimously decide for the death penalty. When their recommendation was announced to the court, several of Greg Wynn's relatives became so distressed that they were removed from the courtroom.

Letters expressing regret that Calhoun County continued to pursue the death penalty for Gregory Wynn, in violation of international law, may be sent to District Attorney Hubbard. Participants who are able to are asked to send brief (not more than 250 words) letters of concern to the following papers, to arrive before 17 September. Although it seems that no letters have yet been published, Greg Wynn's lawyer has said that the papers have approached her about the case because of the letters coming in and have begun to express interest to her about the international concern.

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