

PUBLIC **AI Index: AMR 51/150/2002**

EXTRA 72/02 **Death penalty 12 September 2002**

USA (Ohio) **Robert A. Buell, white, aged 62**

Robert Buell is scheduled to be executed in Ohio on 25 September. He has been on death row for 18 years. Robert Buell was sentenced to death in 1984 for the sexual assault and murder of 11-year-old Krista Harrison. She was abducted from a park on 17 July 1982 and her body was found six days later.

To date all legal appeals against Robert Buell's conviction and sentence -including on the grounds of prosecutorial misconduct - have been unsuccessful. His lawyers argued for clemency in front of the Ohio Adult Parole Board on 10 September. The Board will make a non-binding recommendation to Governor Taft who, in the absence of any last-minute stay issued by the courts, will have the final word on whether Robert Buell lives or dies.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty unconditionally. It believes that every death sentence is an affront to human dignity, and every execution a symptom of a culture of violence, not a solution to it.

At present, 111 countries are abolitionist in law or practice. In the 18 years that Robert Buell has been on death row, more than 40 countries have legislated to abolish the death penalty. In the same period, over 750 men and women have been put to death in the United States of America. It is clear that the USA is out of step on this fundamental human rights issue, and far from the progressive force for human rights it so often claims to be.

There is growing concern in the USA about the fairness and reliability of the death penalty, as the evidence of arbitrariness, discrimination and error in its application continues to mount. There are currently moratoria on executions in force in Illinois and Maryland. Timothy Hagan, the Democratic Party candidate at the forthcoming gubernatorial elections in Ohio on 5 November, has stated that he would impose a moratorium on executions in Ohio if elected.

Ohio has the USA's sixth largest death row in the USA, with 205 condemned prisoners. Robert Buell is scheduled to become the 801st person to be put to death in the United States since executions resumed there in 1977, and the fifth in Ohio.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language, in your own words:

- expressing sympathy for the family of Krista Harrison, and explaining that you are not seeking to condone the manner of her death or minimize the suffering it will have caused;

- opposing the execution of Robert Buell and calling on the governor to grant clemency;
- urging the Governor to support a moratorium on executions in Ohio.

APPEALS TO:

Governor Bob Taft
30th Floor
77 South High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6117, USA
Fax: +1 614 466 3555
Email: Governor.Taft@das.state.oh.us
Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of USA accredited to your country.

You may also send brief letters (do not send emails as attachments) of not more than 250 words to:

Letters to the Editor, *The Dispatch*, 34 S. 3rd St., Columbus 43215, USA. **Fax: +1 614 461 8793**

Email: letters@dispatch.com.

Letters to the Editor, *Akron Beacon Journal*

E-mail: vop@thebeaconjournal.com.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.