

URGENT ACTION

MAN AT RISK OF EXECUTION

Rodney Reed has been on death row in Texas, USA since 1998. He is scheduled to be executed on 20 November 2019 in connection with the murder of a young white woman which he maintains he did not commit. He was convicted on the basis of DNA evidence that shows he had been in an intimate relationship with the victim; and the testimony of a forensic expert, later recanted, who stated at trial that the sexual encounter was contemporary to the murder. Several other experts and witnesses have provided affidavits disputing the evidence at trial, placing Reed's conviction in doubt.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
Office of the Governor
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Austin, Texas 78711
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Dear Governor Abbott,

Rodney Reed has been on death row since 1998 and faces execution on 20 November. He maintains his innocence and several experts cast doubts on his conviction.

Rodney Reed was convicted of the 1996 murder of a white woman. DNA testing of semen from her body was matched to that of Rodney Reed, a black man, who claims they had a consensual romantic relationship. New witnesses have corroborated this. Forensic experts dispute the time of death as stated at trial, questioning the timeline implicating Reed. Texas courts have repeatedly denied requests for DNA testing of other key evidence.

The death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights. Since 1973, 166 people have been exonerated from US death rows on innocence grounds.

I urge you to recommend and grant clemency to Rodney Reed and stop his and any future executions.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rodney Reed was convicted and sentenced to death in 1998 for the murder of Stacey Stites in Texas on 23 April 1996. DNA testing of semen from her body was matched to the DNA of Rodney Reed. The victim was engaged to a white police officer and Rodney Reed initially denied knowing her, fearing being implicated in her murder. Several witnesses have confirmed their relationship.

Expert opinion and other evidence call into question the state's theory of the crime and the forensic evidence on which it was based. The prosecution claimed Rodney Reed's DNA was left during a rape contemporaneous with the murder, occurring around 3am that day. The prosecution's forensic expert has since signed a statement indicating that his testimony was misused by the prosecution; that his estimate "should not have been used at trial as an accurate statement of when Ms Stites died"; and that the semen could have been left more than 24 hours before the victim's death, consistent with Reed's claim of consensual sex in that time frame. Three leading forensic pathologists have also concluded that there is no evidence that Stacey Stites was sexually assaulted rather than having engaged in consensual intercourse at least 24 hours earlier and was killed before midnight on 22 April 1996, and her body kept face down for some four to six hours before being transported to where it was found. One expert concluded that the forensic evidence renders the state's theory about time of death "medically and scientifically impossible". Another concluded "beyond a reasonable degree of medical certainty that, based on all of the forensic evidence, Mr. Reed is scheduled to be executed for a crime he did not commit".

A 2015 execution date was stayed based on newly discovered evidence. However, Texas courts have repeatedly denied requests for DNA testing of that crime scene evidence and reset his execution for 20 November 2019. His attorneys wrote to the Governor on 21 October, urging him to grant a 30-day reprieve and allow the Board of Pardons and Parole to investigate whether commutation should be granted. On 30 October, an application for clemency was filed.

International safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty state that this punishment "may be imposed only when the guilt of the person charged is based upon clear and convincing evidence leaving no room for an alternative explanation of the facts."

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 20 November 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Rodney Reed (He, him, his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: n/a