

URGENT ACTION

STOP FIRST FEDERAL EXECUTIONS IN 17 YEARS

On 15 June, the US Attorney General William Barr directed the Federal Bureau of Prisons to schedule the executions of four death row prisoners who were tried and convicted under federal law. Three executions have been set over five days in July, starting with 13 July. The resumption of executions at the federal level after 17 years would go against the US and global trends away from the death penalty, as national figures for 2019 executions represented the second lowest yearly totals in 28 years. We demand to call off the scheduled executions.

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

Attorney General William Barr
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001
Department Comment Line: 202-353-1555
Email: askdoj@usdoj.gov

Dear Attorney General Barr,

I am writing to ask for your urgent intervention to halt the scheduled executions of four men convicted of serious crimes under US federal law. The US death penalty system is broken.

Arbitrariness, racial bias, flawed legal representation are some of the common factors that have contributed to unreliable judicial decisions on life or death, including for people with severe mental and intellectual disabilities.

No federal executions have been carried out for nearly two decades and 22 US states have now abolished the death penalty, with a further 11 which have not carried out executions in more than 10 years. 2019 figures on executions and death sentences in the USA confirmed that yearly national totals remain within historical lows. Similar trends are reflected at a global level, where 86% of all confirmed global executions in 2019 (excluding China) were recorded in just four countries – Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, in that order. The resumption of federal executions would set the USA against its own record of progress and set a course against the global trend.

I encourage you to do everything in your power to call off the scheduled executions and end the cycle of violence.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 15 June 2020, the US Attorney General William Barr directed the Federal Bureau of Prisons to schedule the executions of four death row prisoners who were tried and convicted under federal law. The executions have been set to be carried out at the US Federal Penitentiary Terre Haute, Indiana, on 13, 15 and 17 July and 28 August. If carried out, these would be the first US federal executions since 2003.

The move follows the introduction by the federal authorities of a revised lethal injection protocol in July 2019, allowing for the use of pentobarbital as a single-drug; and the subsequent setting of five executions between December 2019 and January 2020, which were temporarily stayed to allow the courts to consider appeals filed on behalf of the men.

The US death penalty system is deeply flawed and arbitrary. There have been more than 1,500 executions in the USA since judicial killing resumed under revised statutes in 1977, yet research and individual cases have continuously shown that race, particularly of the murder victim, plays a role in who is sentenced to death. As of 7 July, 2020, 170 people have been exonerated from death row since 1977. In numerous cases, prisoners have gone to their deaths despite serious doubts about the proceedings that led to their convictions, including without adequate legal representation. People with serious mental and intellectual disabilities have been subjected to the death penalty in violation of international law.

No federal executions have been carried out for nearly two decades. As of July 2020, 22 US states have abolished the death penalty and 11 have not carried out executions in more than 10 years. Figures on 2019 executions and death sentences in the USA represented the second lowest yearly totals recorded in 28 and 46 years, respectively. The majority of the world has abandoned the use of the death penalty, with a small minority – 7 US states and 19 other countries – carrying out executions in 2019. Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Egypt accounted for 86% of confirmed global executions in 2019.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. The organization campaigns for total abolition of capital punishment.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 28 August 2020

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Four men at risk of US federal executions (them, they, theirs)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: n/a