

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 51/16/96

EXTRA 23/96

Death Penalty

13 February 1996

USA (CALIFORNIA) William BONIN

William Bonin, white, is scheduled to be executed on 23 February 1996 in California.

Bonin is under two death sentences for the murders of 14 boys and young men between 1979 and 1980. He was first sentenced in January 1982, and then again in 1983.

According to a press report, a neurologist testified in 1992 that Bonin has brain damage which could have made him unable to control his impulses. However, these findings contradict those of other doctors who have examined Bonin. The neurologist also found that Bonin was probably abused as a child by his grandfather. At trial it was claimed that Bonin was sodomised by older men as a child. He is also reported to have a history of mental problems.

According to information received, Bonin's trial lawyer was incompetent and a drug addict who agreed to be paid from the rights to Bonin's life story. A book-rights agreement was discussed but never finalized.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life as declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As of 30 October 1995, there were 422 prisoners under sentence of death in California - the largest death row in the USA. The last person to be executed in the state was David Mason on 25 August 1993, by lethal gas. The method of execution in California is lethal gas or lethal injection - prisoners have to choose by which method to die. If the prisoner fails to choose the method by which he/she is to die, he/she will be executed by lethal gas.

In California, the Governor has sole authority to grant clemency.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Faxes/telegrams/telephone calls/express letters in English if possible:

- acknowledging the seriousness of the crimes for which William Bonin was sentenced to death, and expressing deep sympathy for the victims' families;
- saying that you are not arguing that criminals should go unpunished, but stating your unconditional opposition to the death penalty in all cases;
- pointing 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;
- urging the Governor to commute William Bonin's death sentence.

APPEALS TO:

The Honorable Pete Wilson
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814
USA

Telephone: + 1 916 445 2841

Telegrams: Governor Wilson, Sacramento, California, USA

2

Faxes: + 1 916 445 4633
Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

The Letters Editor
Los Angeles Times
Times Mirror Square
Los Angeles, CA 90053
USA

Faxes: +1 213 237 7190

and to diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.