

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AMR 51/34/90

Distr: UA/SC

UA 340/90

Death Penalty

22 August 1990

USA (Wyoming): Mark HOPKINSON

=====
Mark Hopkinson is scheduled to be executed by lethal injection in Wyoming on 25 September 1990. If carried out this will be the first execution in Wyoming for 25 years.

Mark Hopkinson, white, aged 40, received life sentences in 1977 for the bombing in August 1977 of lawyer Vincent Vehars' home which killed Vehar, his wife and youngest son. Whilst in prison serving these sentences, Hopkinson was sentenced to death in 1979 for ordering the murder of Jeffrey Green, white, who was to testify before a grand jury investigating the Vehar murders. On appeal the state Supreme Court affirmed the convictions but vacated Hopkinson's death sentence and ordered a new sentencing trial. Hopkinson was again sentenced to death in 1982.

Hopkinson has now exhausted all his legal appeals and it is feared that the execution will go ahead as scheduled. The actual perpetrators of Green's murder have never been arrested.

As of 2 May 1990, there were 2 prisoners under sentence of death in Wyoming. The last execution carried out in Wyoming was that of Andrew Pixley on 10 December 1965.

On 26 February 1990, after a study of capital sentencing practices, the General Accounting Office, an independent agency of the federal government, reported that the race of the murder victim influenced the likelihood that a defendant would be charged with capital murder and receive the death penalty if convicted. Eighty-two percent of the studies it examined suggested that those who murdered whites were more likely to be sentenced to death than those who murdered blacks.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Faxes/airmail letters/telegrams/telephone calls:

- asking Governor Sullivan to grant clemency in this case and commute Hopkinson's death sentence;
- expressing concern at Wyoming's move to resume executions after 25 years and urging that the state not take this retrograde step: cite the world trend toward abolition of the death penalty, and any relevant developments you may know of in your own country;
- letters to newspapers may cite other arguments against the death penalty such as its lack of any proven deterrent effect against violent crime and the arbitrariness of its use in practice.

APPEALS TO:

The Hon Mike Sullivan
Governor of Wyoming
State Capitol
Cheyenne, WY 82002
USA

Telegrams: Governor Sullivan, WY 82002,
USA
Telephone: (307) 777 7434
FAX: (307) 777 6869

LETTERS TO NEWSPAPERS:

Casper Star Tribune
PO Box 80
Casper, WY 82602
USA
Attn: Charles Leverdosky

New York Times
The New York Times Company
229 W 43 St
New York, NY 10035
USA

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of the USA in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY, TO ARRIVE BY 24 SEPTEMBER 1990.