

# URGENT ACTION

## GOVERNOR GRANTS REPRIEVE FROM EXECUTION

**The Governor of Ohio has granted a two-week reprieve to a Lebanese national with mental illness who was facing execution on 6 June. The reprieve is to allow a court more time to examine the question of whether the inmate is “competent” for execution.**

**Abdul Hamin Awkal** was due to be executed in Ohio on the morning of 6 June for the murder in 1992 of his wife Latife Awkal and her brother Mahmoud Abdul-Aziz. Abdul Awkal has a history of mental illness. In pre-trial custody he was prescribed anti-psychotic and anti-depressant medication. The trial judge found that the severity of his depression rendered him not competent to stand trial. Abdul Awkal was held in a psychiatric facility where his anti-psychotic medication was increased, and he was subsequently found competent to stand trial.

At a clemency hearing before the Ohio Parole Board on 10 May 2012, Abdul Awkal's lawyers presented about his history of severe depressive and delusional disorders. Psychiatrist Dr Phillip Resnick said that in 2005, 2007 and 2012 he had diagnosed Abdul Awkal as suffering from schizoaffective disorder, a serious mental condition combining psychosis and mood disorder, and detailed his “grandiose and persecutorial delusions”. In a letter to Governor John Kasich, one of his lawyers wrote: “Abdul Awkal lives in a delusional world” in which he believes he has “directed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan”, “advises high-ranking government officials by mail”, receiving coded messages in reply, and that “the CIA wants him dead” because he is “not helping them anymore”.

The parole board acknowledged that “Awkal suffers from Schizoaffective Disorder, Depressive Type”, but voted 8-1 against clemency. Their decision was not binding on Governor Kasich, but on 30 May 2012, he denied clemency.

On 4 June 2012, a trial level judge found that there was evidence that Abdul Awkal was not competent for execution under US law, that is, that he did not have a rational understanding of the reason for and reality of his punishment. However, on 5 June the Ohio Supreme Court refused to stay the execution to allow the judge to conduct a hearing. Two of the judges dissented, saying that they believed a stay was warranted and that Dr Resnick should re-assess Abdul Awkal on the question of whether he is competent for execution. Later on 5 June, Governor Kasich issued a two-week reprieve so that the trial-level judge can hold a hearing into the competence issue.

**No further action by the UA Network is requested at this time. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**

This is the first update of UA 151/12. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/039/2012/en>

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