

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 300/02 (AMR 51/157/2002, 3 October 2002) and follow-ups (AMR 51/167/2002, 7 December 2002; and AMR 51/026/2003, 18 February 2003) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Texas)

James Blake Colburn (m), white, aged 43

James Colburn was executed in Texas on 26 March 2003. He was sentenced to death in Texas in October 1995 for the murder of Peggy Murphy in 1994. James Colburn had an extensive history of paranoid schizophrenia, a serious mental illness with symptoms including delusions and hallucinations.

After the execution, his sister said: "The state has killed a very mentally ill man. I feel sorry for the victim's family but I also feel sorry for my family right now, too." James Colburn's brother added: "Society is very uneducated when it comes to mental illness".

On 24 March, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles announced that it was rejecting clemency by 16 votes to one. The Governor did not intervene to issue a reprieve, and all final appeals to the courts were denied.

James Colburn becomes the 22nd prisoner to be put to death in the USA this year, and the 842nd since judicial killing resumed there in 1977. Texas accounts for 301 of these executions, 12 of which it has carried out this year. With the execution of James Colburn, the USA has once again contravened standards of decency and justice urged by the international community. Repeated resolutions at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights over recent years have called on all retentionist countries to desist from using the death penalty against anyone suffering from any form of mental disorder.

No further action is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.