

14 July 2000

Further information on UA 139/00 (AMR 51/83/00, 26 May 2000) and follow-ups (AMR 51/89/00, 2 June and AMR 51/105/00, 23 June) - Death penalty

USA (Texas) Jessy San Miguel, Latino, aged 28 (executed - 29 June)
Caruthers Alexander, black, aged 51 (stay of execution)
Orien Cecil Joiner, white, aged 50 (executed - 12 July)
Juan Soria, Latino, aged 33 (26 July)
Brian Roberson, black, aged 36 (9 August)
Oliver Cruz, Latino, aged 33 (9 August)
John Satterwhite, black, aged 53 (16 August)
Richard Wayne Jones, white, aged 40 (22 August)
David Earl Gibbs, white, aged 39 (23 August)
Jeffery Caldwell, black, aged 37 (30 August)

Jessy San Miguel and Orien Cecil Joiner were executed in Texas on 29 June and 12 July respectively.

Seven more prisoners convicted of capital murder remain scheduled for execution in Texas before the end of August (names above with the date the state plans to kill them).

Texas now accounts for 25 of the 54 executions carried out in the USA this year. Since the USA resumed executions in 1977, 652 prisoners have been put to death nationwide, 224 of them in Texas.

On 7 July, a county court judge stopped the execution of Caruthers Alexander, scheduled for 12 July. The reprieve was granted so that modern DNA testing techniques can be carried out on a hair found on the victim, Lori Bruch, a 19-year-old woman raped and strangled in 1981.

Oliver Cruz's execution date has been moved from 19 July to 9 August.

The death penalty in the USA, particularly the high rate of executions in Texas, continues to generate significant national and international attention and debate due to a growing awareness of the capital justice system's capacity for error.

The risk of executing the innocent, which will always be present in any capital justice system no matter how sophisticated, is just one reason to abolish the death penalty. Amnesty International, while sympathizing with the suffering of the victims of violent crime and their families, believes that the death penalty is inherently cruel, inhuman and degrading, is brutalizing to all involved in its application, and is a symptom of, rather than a solution to, a culture of violence. The death penalty in the USA disproportionately targets the poor and members of racial and ethnic minority groups. US leaders should actively work towards abolition of this outdated and fallible punishment, rather than relying on perceived public support for executions to justify their continuation.

Governor Bush can only commute a sentence if he receives a recommendation to do so from his appointees on the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP). A former Texas Attorney General recently said: "There's no doubt if the governor tells the paroles board what he wants done, they do it." In any event, the Governor can grant a 30-day reprieve, and then ask the BPP to review the case.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: If possible, please maintain the pressure on the Texas authorities by continuing to send faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language, **IN YOUR OWN WORDS**, protesting at the relentless use of the death penalty in Texas and calling on the Governor and the BPP to use their powers to stop all executions in Texas and to support a moratorium with a view to abolition.

APPEALS TO:

The Honorable George W. Bush
Governor of Texas
PO Box 12428, Austin, TX 78711-2428, USA
Faxes: + 1 512 463 1849 or 637 8800
Salutation: Dear Governor

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles
PO Box 13401, Austin, TX 78711-3401, USA
Faxes: + 1 512 463 8120
Salutation: Dear Board Members

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of the USA accredited to your country.

You may also send letters of concern (not more than 250 words) to: Letters to the Editor, *Dallas Morning News*, PO Box 655237, Dallas, TX 75265, USA.
Fax: +1 972 263 0456
E-mail: letterstoeditor@dallasnews.com

You may write to other Texas newspapers, if you have details. For those with access to the Internet, see: **www.onlinenewspapers.com/ustexas.htm**

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 August 2000.