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## **PUBLIC STATEMENT**

### **USA: Amnesty International welcomes last-minute reprieve for Larry Robison**

The eleventh hour reprieve granted to Larry Robison by a Texas court yesterday provides an opportunity for the state to turn away from executing the mentally ill, Amnesty International said today.

“We welcome the stay of execution, although we regret that it has taken Texas so long to do anything positive for Larry Robison,” Amnesty International said.

“We hope that the state will now build on this decision and begin to treat, rather than kill, its citizens whose mental illness brings them into contact with the capital justice system.”

Larry Robison, a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic, was already en route to the lethal injection chamber when the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals voted 5-4 to stop his execution. Robison’s lawyers had filed a last-minute appeal on the grounds that he was unable to fully comprehend his punishment. Their success means that he will now have a hearing on the issue.

Amnesty International members worldwide have been appealing for the past six weeks to Governor Bush and his appointees on the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to stop Larry Robison’s execution. The Board voted 17-0 last Friday to reject clemency.

Governor Bush, who is running for US President under the flag of ‘compassionate conservatism’, had not formally announced his decision on whether to grant a 30-day reprieve -- his only remaining option following the Board’s negative vote -- when the appeal court’s ruling came in.

“We had appealed for Governor Bush to use the opportunity presented by Larry Robison’s case to demonstrate that compassion, as well as respect for international standards, can become a characteristic of his leadership,” Amnesty International added.

“The unexpected, but welcome, last-minute reprieve granted by the court means that this opportunity is still alive.”

Larry Robison would have become the 98<sup>th</sup> person to be executed under the governorship of Mr Bush. As the Texas conveyor belt of death continues, that appalling statistic is set to be realised tonight with the scheduled execution of Joe Mario Trevino.

### **Background**

Larry Robison was diagnosed as suffering from paranoid schizophrenia in 1979. However, he was refused the necessary treatment because he had not been violent. When he did actually commit murder three years later, he was condemned to death for it.

The juries at Larry Robison's 1983 trial and his retrial in 1987 rejected his claim of not guilty by reason of insanity, and his subsequent death sentence has been upheld by state and federal courts alike over the past 12 years.

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