

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 51/209/99

14 December 1999

Further information on UA 230/99 (AMR 51/144/99, 3 September 1999) and follow-ups (AMR 51/164/99, 12 October and AMR 51/184/99, 15 November) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (North Carolina) Johnnie Lee McKnight, aged 19

The hearing into Johnnie McKnight's competency to stand trial was postponed shortly before it was due to begin on 7 December 1999. It will now not be held until 24 or 25 January 2000.

No further action is requested, although those who wish to may continue to send appeals based on the most recent update (AMR 51/184/99, 15 November):

- expressing deep concern that Cumberland County has reportedly still not withdrawn its intention to seek the death penalty against Johnnie Lee McKnight, in violation of the global ban on the death penalty against those under 18 at the time of the crime;
- noting that almost every country in the world adheres to this principle;
- noting with concern evidence that Johnnie McKnight has serious learning disabilities and pointing out that under international standards the death penalty should not be used against those suffering from mental retardation or very limited mental competence (you may also note that 12 US states prohibit such use);
- urging that the prosecution drop its pursuit of the death penalty at or before the competency hearing.

APPEALS TO:

The Honourable Margaret R. Russ (prosecuting this case)
Assistant District Attorney
117 Dick Street
Fayetteville, NC 28301, USA
Faxes: + 1 910 678 2949
Tel: + 1 910 678 2915
Salutation: Dear Assistant District Attorney

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

You may also write brief (about 250 words) letters to:

The People's Forum, *Raleigh News and Observer*, PO Box 191, Raleigh, NC 27602, USA
Faxes: + 1 919 829 4872
E-mails: forum@nando.com