

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 92/95

Death Penalty

10 August 1995

BERMUDA Rudolph Leroy WEST

Amnesty International is concerned that Rudolph Leroy West may be executed at any time after 22 August 1995. No one has been executed in Bermuda since 1977 when two men were hanged, sparking major riots.

West was sentenced to death on 1 August 1995 for the murder of his estranged wife, Rochelle Marcia West, on 5 January this year. He has 21 days in which to appeal. West pleaded guilty to premeditated murder and is reported to have attempted suicide three times since his arrest. However, no psychiatric report was carried out to determine his mental state. His guilty plea was reportedly based on a confession statement he had made.

It is not yet clear whether West will appeal his conviction. In the absence of an appeal, the prerogative of mercy lies, in practice, with the Governor of Bermuda, who acts on the advice of a five-member Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In April 1989 the Bermudian Parliament debated a motion tabled by an opposition MP to abolish the death penalty. The vote was decided by the Speaker, thus preserving the status quo. A referendum on the issue, which was not binding on Members of Parliament, took place in August 1990. About 79% of those who voted (a third of registered voters) favoured retention of the death penalty.

In 1991 the British Government abolished the death penalty in all its dependencies in the Caribbean except Bermuda. It expressed the hope that Bermuda would soon follow the example.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please telephone, or send telegrams/faxes/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- welcoming the fact that no executions have been carried out in Bermuda for the past 18 years;
- urging the Governor General to exercise clemency in the case of Rudolph Leroy West by commuting his sentence;
- noting that the absence of a psychiatric report at the trial is an added concern and further reason for seeking clemency;
- noting that the death penalty was abolished in all the United Kingdom's dependencies in the Caribbean in 1991, and urging the Government of Bermuda to follow this example.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency the Governor
The Right Honourable Lord Waddington, GCVO, PC, QC
Government House
11 Langton Hill
Pembroke HM 13, Bermuda
Telephone: + 1 809 292 3600

Faxes: + 1 809 292 6831

Telegrams: Governor Waddington, Pembroke, Bermuda

Salutation: Your Excellency

The Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy

c/o Government House

11 Langton Hill

Pembroke HM 13, Bermuda

Faxes: + 1 809 292 6831

Telegrams: Prerogative of Mercy Committee, Government House, Pembroke, Bermuda

Salutation: Dear Committee Members

COPIES TO:

The Royal Gazette

PO Box HM 1025

Hamilton HM DX, Bermuda

and to diplomatic representatives of Bermuda accredited to your country.

(Bermuda is a self-governing British Territory).

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 September 1995.