

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 320/99 (AMR 51/213/99, 16 December 1999) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Texas)Glen Charles McGinnis, black, aged 27

On 25 January 2000 Glen McGinnis was executed in Texas shortly after 6pm local time. His execution is a blatant violation of international law, which prohibits the use of the death penalty against child offenders.

Glen McGinnis had been sentenced to death for the murder of Leta Ann Wilkerson during a robbery of a laundry in Conroe, Montgomery County, Texas, in August 1990. He was 17 at the time of the crime.

Glen McGinnis gave no final statement before being given a lethal injection. In a recent interview he reportedly said that he did not want to use the abuse and abandonment that marked his childhood to make excuses for his crime, although he wondered what would have been if he had not lived on the streets for most of his teenage years (see original UA).

The European Union appealed for clemency: "The European Union respectfully urges the United States authorities to commute Mr McGinnis' sentence to life imprisonment, or such other penalty compatible with international law." The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the American Bar Association and the Pope also appealed for the execution to be stopped.

In a letter sent to Governor George W. Bush of Texas on 24 January, Amnesty International's Secretary General Pierre Sané wrote: "On behalf of more than one million Amnesty International members across some 100 countries, I am writing to you in your capacity not only as a Governor who took office on a promise to make Texas a "beacon" state, but also as a presidential contender in a country which claims to be a shining light for human rights in the world. There is indeed no doubt that in the next few hours, a spotlight of an international nature will be focused on the USA - specifically on your office, and the power invested in you to reprieve those condemned to death in Texas. After those hours have passed, citizens and governments across the world will be able to make their own assessment of the respect for global human rights standards held, not only by the highest executive officer of an individual US state, but also by a potential future leader on the world stage."

Governor Bush has again shown his contempt for international standards of justice, and deepened the USA's isolation in a world where almost no other country executes people for crimes committed when they were children.

Glen McGinnis becomes the third child offender to be executed in the USA in January 2000. Since October 1997, there have been eight known executions of child offenders in the world - one in Iran and seven in the USA. Three of these US executions have taken place in Texas, under the governorship of George W Bush.

Eleven prisoners have been executed in the USA in January 2000, bringing to 609 the total number of inmates executed since the USA resumed executing in 1977.

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No further action is requested by the UA Network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.