

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 51/27/99

10 February 1999

**Further information on EXTRA 79/98 (AMR 51/90/98, 3 November 1998) and follow-ups (AMR 51/95/98, 18 November 1998 and AMR 51/12/99, 22 January 1999) - Death Penalty / Legal Concern**

**USA (California) Jaturun SIRIPONGS, Thai national, aged 43**

---

Jaturun Siripongs was executed as scheduled, by lethal injection, on 9 February 1999.

He had been sentenced to death in 1983 for the murder of Packovan Wattanaporn and Quach Nguyen during a robbery in a Californian market in 1981, 18 months after arriving in the USA from Thailand.

On 6 February, the newly elected Governor Davis rejected a plea for clemency - the first such plea to come before him since assuming office.

Although the governor acknowledged a plea for clemency from Packovan Wattanaporn's husband, a Buddhist, on religious grounds, his decision on the case quoted at length from letters sent to him by Packovan Wattanaporn's son and daughter, asking for the execution to go ahead.

The governor, a Catholic, did not refer to a plea from a Los Angeles Cardinal who had urged him not to use the death penalty "as a tool by which vengeance and revenge can be exacted and political advantage can be maintained." Pope John Paul II and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sacramento are also reported to have appealed for clemency, along with the Government of Thailand and a juror from the original trial.

A Deputy District Attorney was reported as stating that "Our office is very pleased with Governor Davis's decision because it respects the wishes of (victims') family members...".

In response to a plea for clemency from a former Warden at San Quentin on the grounds that Jaturun Siripongs had been an exemplary prisoner, the governor wrote "The fact that Mr Siripongs may have been a model prisoner for 16 years... is beside the central point - model behaviour cannot bring back the lives of the two innocent murder victims. These capital crimes can only be satisfied by the duly imposed sentence."

The governor also refused to impose a stay of execution to allow for forensic evidence to be tested to try to establish if an accomplice had been responsible for the murders, as Jaturun Siripongs has always claimed.

Jaturun Siripongs became the sixth person to be executed in California since the state resumed executions in 1992. There are another 526 prisoners on death row in California, the highest death row population in the USA.

This was the 14th execution in the USA in 1999, and the 514th execution nationwide since the USA resumed judicial executions in 1977.

**Thanks to those who sent appeals on behalf of Jaturun Siripongs. No further action is requested.**