

PUBLIC

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21 February 2000

Further information on UA 24/00 (AMR 51/19/00, 31 January 2000) -  
Death Penalty

USA (TEXAS) Betty Lou Beets (f), aged 62

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Betty Lou Beets remains scheduled for execution in Texas on 24 February 2000.

On 18 February, her attorneys filed a law suit against the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) in federal district court. They assert that the BPP violated its own regulations by failing to assess Betty Beets's case under a special clemency review program that it established for all battered women imprisoned for killing a family member.

Under the terms of a 1991 resolution adopted by the Texas Legislature, the Texas Council on Family Violence was mandated to assist the BPP in documenting cases involving domestic violence, for special consideration of whether parole, pardon or commutation should be granted. In a recent letter to the BPP, the Director of the Texas Council recognized that Betty Beets "is precisely the sort of defendant whose case was contemplated" by the legislative order and supported her attorneys' request for a 180-day reprieve to permit a comprehensive clemency review.

In an open letter published in the *Houston Chronicle* on 17 February, Amnesty International USA and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence urged Governor George W. Bush to commute Betty Beets's death sentence. "The execution of Betty Lou Beets will only complete a cycle of appalling abuse and violence," the letter states. Organizations opposed to domestic violence in a dozen US states were signatories to the open letter.

A similar joint letter to Governor Bush from a coalition of state and national domestic violence organizations representing groups in some 30 US states, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom also calls for a reprieve and the commutation of Betty Beets' sentence to life imprisonment.

According to the National Clearinghouse on Battered Women, over 100 imprisoned battered women across the USA have had their prison sentences commuted since 1991, while legislatures and governors around the country have recognized the role of domestic and sexual violence as mitigating factors in capital cases.

Betty Lou Beets was sentenced to death in 1985 for the murder of her husband, after a trial in which crucial mitigating evidence was never presented to the jury, including her traumatic history of severe physical and sexual abuse from an early age. For additional case details, please refer to the original Urgent Action.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please continue to send telegrams/e-mails in English or your own language, as recommended in original UA:**

- acknowledging the serious nature of the crime of which Betty Lou Beets was convicted, and expressing sympathy for the victim's relatives and friends;
- expressing deep concern that the jury who sentenced her to death never knew that Betty Lou Beets has a lifelong history of abuse, including at the hands of her spouses, and a host of mental disorders stemming from that abuse;

- noting that the appeal courts have found serious flaws in this case that have not been remedied;
- urging Governor Bush to live up to his pledge to be a "compassionate conservative" by showing compassion in this case;
- requesting the Governor to persuade the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles to convene a full and fair clemency hearing for Betty Lou Beets.

**Appeals to:**

The Hon. George W. Bush  
Governor of Texas  
PO Box 12428, Austin,  
TX 78711-2428, USA

**Telegrams: Governor Bush, Austin, TX, USA**

**Faxes: + 1 512 463 1849**

**E-mails: [www.governor.state.tx.us/e-mail.html](http://www.governor.state.tx.us/e-mail.html)**

**Copies to:**

Gerald Garrett  
Chairman of the Board Of Pardons and Paroles  
Executive Clemency Unit  
Price Daniel, Sr. Bldg., Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles  
P.O. Box 13401 Austin, TX 78711-3401, USA  
**Faxes: + 1 512 463 8120**

and to US diplomatic representatives in your country.

You may also continue to send letters of concern (not more than 250 words)  
to: Letters to the Editor,

*Dallas Morning News*

**Fax:+ 1 972 263 0456**

**E-mail: [letterstoeditor@dallasnews.com](mailto:letterstoeditor@dallasnews.com)**

*Austin American-Statesman*

**Fax:+ 1 512 445 1701**

**E-mail: [letters@statesman.com](mailto:letters@statesman.com)**

*Houston Chronicle*

**Fax:+ 1 713 220 6677**

**E-mail: [viewpoints@chron.com](mailto:viewpoints@chron.com)**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**