

3 March 2000

Further information on EXTRA 09/00 (AMR 51/28/99, 18 February 2000) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Alabama) Freddie Lee Wright, black, aged 49

Freddie Lee Wright, black, was executed in Alabama's electric chair in the first few minutes of 3 March 2000. He was sentenced to death for the 1977 murder of Warren and Lois Green, both white, during a robbery in their store in Mount Vernon, southern Alabama.

Governor Siegelman denied clemency on 1 March. Freddie Lee Wright's final appeals to the courts, claiming that execution in the electric chair violates the US Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment, were rejected. On 22 February the US Supreme Court refused by five votes to four to hear the same claim brought by Robert Lee Tarver, an Alabama inmate, whose execution was stayed on 4 February to allow the court to make a decision on the cruelty issue. Late on 2 March, the US Supreme Court ruled 5-4 against Freddie Lee Wright. His execution went ahead a few hours later.

Warren and Lois Green's daughter reportedly planned to witness the execution with two uncles. She is reported to have testified on 1 March before legislators considering whether to adopt lethal injection as an alternative to the electric chair. She argued against such a proposal, saying that she "didn't feel that a convicted killer has a right to choose what form of execution they should have." No decision has yet been reached on the proposal.

Freddie Lee Wright becomes the second person to be executed in Alabama this year, and the 21st since the state resumed executions in 1983.

The USA has now executed 20 prisoners this year and 618 since 1977.

No further action is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.