

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AMR 51/46/96

7 June 1996

Further information (1) on EXTRA 81/96 (AMR 51/44/96, 29 May 1996) - Death Penalty

USA (MARYLAND) Flint Gregory HUNT

Flint Gregory Hunt, who was scheduled to be executed in Maryland during the week beginning 10-14 June has been granted a stay of execution by the Maryland Supreme Court. If the execution had taken place, Flint Hunt would have been the first black non-consensual person to be executed in the state in 35 years.

John Thanos, white, became the first person to be executed in the state in nearly 33 years on 17 May 1994; he had chosen to give up his appeals and allow the state to carry out his execution. Hunt's case has highlighted a current debate in the state focusing on racial disparities in carrying out capital punishment in Maryland. There are currently reported to be 16 prisoners under sentence of death in the state; 14 of these are black.

Amnesty International has been informed that further legal proceedings will resume on Hunt's case in September. In the meantime, his attorneys have presented a plea for clemency to Governor Glendening which includes a videotape of Hunt and members of his family urging Governor Glendening to commute Hunt's sentence to life without parole, an option not available in Maryland when Hunt was sentenced to death. The video also includes statements by 3 jurors who sentenced Hunt to death saying that if they had had the option they would have recommended a life sentence without parole. Governor Glendening, who has previously stated that he will not delay Hunt's execution, is also facing a demand by the Legislative Black Caucus of the state's General Assembly to block Hunt's execution at least long enough for a commission to be appointed to study racial disparities in the application of the death penalty in Maryland. This would be in accordance with a promise Governor Glendening made last year when he proposed legislation to streamline the death penalty process in Maryland (Amnesty International does not know whether or not this legislation has been passed).

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 and degrading punishment as proclaimed in Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or in your own language:

- urging Governor Glendening to commute Hunt's sentence of death, noting that three of the jurors who sentenced him to death are reported to have stated that, if they had had the option, they would have sentenced him to life without parole;
- expressing concern at the disproportionately high numbers of black inmates on Maryland's death row and urging Governor Glendening to establish a commission of inquiry to look into the situation, as he promised in 1995.

APPEALS TO:

Maryland State Governor
Governor Parris Glendening
State House

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100 State Circle
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Telegrams: Governor Glendening, Annapolis, Maryland, USA
Salutation: Dear Governor

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