

# URGENT ACTION

## TEXAS EXECUTES MAN THREE DECADES AFTER CRIME

**David Lee Powell was executed in the US state of Texas on 15 June for the murder of a police officer committed in May 1978. He had been on death row for more than half of his life.**

Officer Ralph Ablanedo was shot dead in the state capital, Austin, in May 1978. David Powell was convicted of his murder in October 1978. In 1989, the US Supreme Court overturned the conviction and death sentence. David Powell was retried in 1991 and again sentenced to death. In 1994, this sentence was overturned by the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals. In 1999, a new sentencing hearing was held and he was again sentenced to death.

On 11 June 2010, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles voted against clemency, unanimously rejecting the powerful case presented to it of David Powell's rehabilitation. A psychiatrist who has treated David Powell in recent years has said "David Powell has an exceptional ability to reach out and educate others. He can trace his own untoward footsteps and paths with great clarity and wisdom." A dozen death row inmates have said that David Powell had given them positive guidance. For further information see Amnesty International report *People can change. Will Texas?* <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/048/2010/en>.

Governor Rick Perry declined to intervene to stop the execution. Last-minute appeals to the courts were unsuccessful.

About 150 former and current Austin police officers supportive of the execution travelled to Huntsville where they waited outside the prison as the lethal injection was carried out.

David Powell becomes the 13<sup>th</sup> person to be executed in Texas this year and the 28<sup>th</sup> to be put to death in the USA as a whole during 2010. His execution brings to 1,216 the number of people killed in US execution chambers since judicial killing resumed there in 1977. Texas accounts for 460 of these executions, 221 of which have been carried out since Governor Perry took office in 2001.

**No further action by the Urgent Action Network is requested. David Powell's lawyer has expressed his appreciation for Amnesty International's efforts in this case.**

This is the first update of UA 118/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/043/2010/en>

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