

PUBLIC

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Further information on EXTRA 30/02 (AMR 51/060/2002, 16 April 2002) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (South Carolina)Richard Charles Johnson, aged 39, white

Richard Johnson was executed in South Carolina on 3 May 2002. He had been sentenced to death for the murder of a police officer, Bruce Smalls, in 1985. Developments since his conviction, including a confession from a co-defendant, raised serious questions about Johnson's guilt (see original action).

The Governor of South Carolina denied clemency, saying that he was convinced of Richard Johnson's guilt. His spokesperson said that the governor had received 1,850 letters and emails asking for clemency, most of them from outside South Carolina.

In a written final statement, Richard Johnson said: "I would like to thank Trooper Smalls' mother, Thelma Blue, and other members of the Smalls family who asked the governor to commute my sentence. If everyone in the world had the courage and compassion they have shown, it would be a much better place. It is hard to explain how frustrating it is to be here year after year when you have no memory of what happened, and not to be able to defend yourself. It is also hard to understand a system that would allow 2 people charged with a crime to go free and take another man's life. I want to thank my mother and sister and brother and all my family and friends for standing by me all these years. I want to thank all the people who have supported me, my lawyer and everyone who wrote, called, and contacted the governor on my behalf. Keep up the fight against the death penalty. Take care."

Richard Johnson was the 24th person to be executed in the USA this year, and the 773rd since the USA resumed executions in 1977. Twenty-six of these executions have been in South Carolina.

No further action by the UA Network is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.