

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 51/194/99

2 December 1999

Further information on EXTRA 152/99 (AMR 51/175/99, 29 October 1999) and follow-up (AMR 51/187/99, 19 November) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Oklahoma)Cornel Cooks, aged 43

Cornel Cooks was executed as scheduled in the first few minutes of 2 December 1999 in Oklahoma State Penitentiary. He had been sentenced to death in 1983 for the rape and murder of 87-year-old Jennie Ridling at her home in Lawton, in October 1982.

Cornel Cooks became the 90th prisoner to be executed in the USA this year, the highest annual total since 1951. A total of 590 condemned prisoners have now been put to death nationwide since the USA resumed executions in 1977.

Amnesty International has expressed its concerns about aspects of the state's handling of Cornel Cooks' 16 November clemency hearing, at which clemency was rejected by all five members of the Pardon and Parole Board (see *Open letter to Assistant Attorney General Humes, Oklahoma, USA*, AMR 51/193/99, 2 December 1999). During the hearing the Assistant Attorney General argued against clemency for Cornel Cooks by referring to the cases of prisoners yet to come before the Board. Amnesty International believes that his comments undermined the possibility that the hearing could be a genuinely individualized appeal for clemency based on the specific aspects of Cornel Cooks' case. The Assistant Attorney General also complained about international appeals for clemency for Cornel Cooks.

On 1 December, the local newspaper, the *Oklahoman*, reported that among the letters to the Governor appealing for clemency was a letter "from 17 members of the German federal parliament".

No further action by the UA Network is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals on behalf of Cornel Cooks.