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Louisiana must end its campaign of vengeance against Albert Woodfox

Following the death of Herman Wallace last Friday, who was held in solitary confinement for nearly 40 years, Amnesty International is launching a campaign for the release of his co-defendant Albert Woodfox. He too has been held in cruel conditions of isolation following the deeply flawed trial.

"Albert Woodfox has been in solitary confinement for decades, even though the case against him was based on flawed evidence and riddled with procedural errors. Enough is enough. The state of Louisiana must accept the federal court's ruling and release Albert Woodfox from prison," said Tessa Murphy, USA campaigner at Amnesty International.

Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace were both convicted of the 1972 murder of prison guard, Brent Miller. There was no physical evidence to link them to the crime and their convictions relied primarily on the dubious testimony of a sole eyewitness who received favourable treatment in return for his testimony.

Both men have robustly denied any involvement in the crime. They believe they were falsely implicated in the murder because of their political activism in prison as members of the Black Panther Party.

Earlier this year a federal judge overturned the conviction. However

Albert Woodfox continues to languish in jail after the state of Louisiana appealed against his release.

During the legal process that has spanned four decades, Albert Woodfox's conviction has been overturned three times.

"Were it not for the state of Louisiana's dogged determination to appeal against these rulings, Albert Woodfox would almost certainly be a free man by now," said Tessa Murphy.

Herman Wallace was released last week just days before he died of liver cancer. A federal judge who overturned his conviction said it would hold the state in contempt of court if it attempted to appeal the case.

For most of the last four decades, Albert Woodfox has been confined to a small cell for 23 hours a day, denied access to meaningful social interaction and rehabilitation programmes.

Prison records show that Albert has not committed any serious disciplinary infractions for years and that he doesn't pose a threat to himself or others.

"Nothing can justify the cruelty that the state has inflicted on Albert Woodfox," said Tessa Murphy "After an unsafe conviction and 40 years of cruel treatment, he must now be allowed his freedom."