

URGENT ACTION

MAN EXECUTED IN TEXAS FOR POST-9/11 MURDER

Mark Stroman was executed in Texas on the evening of 20 July for the murder of an Indian immigrant following the 9/11 attacks in the USA.

Mark Stroman was put to death for the murder on 4 October 2001 of Vasudev Patel, a native of India who was shot and killed in the petrol station he and his wife operated. The murder was part of a series of violent crimes in the area following 11 September 2001 for which Mark Stroman claimed responsibility. One victim of this crime spree, Rais Bhuiyan, survived, despite being shot in the face with a shotgun at close range. Rais Bhuiyan had appealed for clemency for Mark Stroman.

In a recent interview with the New York Times, Rais Bhuiyan was asked why he was trying to save Mark Stroman's life. He said: "I was raised very well by my parents and teachers. They raised me with good morals and strong faith. They taught me to put yourself in others' shoes. Even if they hurt you, don't take revenge. Forgive them. Move on. It will bring something good to you and them. My Islamic faith teaches me this too. He said he did this as an act of war and a lot of Americans wanted to do it but he had the courage to do it — to shoot Muslims. After it happened I was just simply struggling to survive in this country. I decided that forgiveness was not enough. That what he did was out of ignorance. I decided I had to do something to save this person's life. That killing someone in Dallas is not an answer for what happened on Sept. 11... I requested a meeting with Mr Stroman. I'm eagerly awaiting to see him in person and exchange ideas. I would talk about love and compassion. We all make mistakes. He's another human being, like me. Hate the sin, not the sinner. It's very important that I meet him to tell him I feel for him and I strongly believe he should get a second chance. That I never hated the US. He could educate a lot of people. Thinking about what is going to happen makes me very emotional. I can't sleep. Once I go to bed I feel there is another person that I know who is in his bed thinking about what is going to happen to him — that he is going to be tied to a bed and killed. It makes me very emotional and very sad and makes me want to do more. "

Asked what he thought of Rais Bhuiyan's efforts, Mark Stroman told the New York Times: "Yes, Mr Rais Bhuiyan, what an inspiring soul...for him to come forward after what I've done speaks volumes...and has really touched my heart and the heart of many others worldwide".

The execution, originally scheduled for 6pm, was delayed briefly by appeals in the courts filed on behalf of Rais Bhuiyan who was seeking a stay of execution in order that he would be able to pursue victim-offender mediation under Texas law. In a motion filed in federal court, lawyers argued that the Victim-Offender Mediation/Dialogue program available in Texas "offers the very process" that Rais Bhuiyan's faith "motivates him to engage in". It argued that if Mark Stroman were to be executed, Rais Bhuiyan would permanently be deprived of the opportunity "to close this chapter of his life, obtain peace of mind, and move on from the initial victimization that he suffered when he was shot". The District Court refused to stay the execution, ruling that the "irreparable injury" asserted by Rais Bhuiyan was "outweighed by the damage to the operation of the criminal justice system as a whole that would result from this Court's granting the requested stay".

The lethal injection was carried out less than an hour after the final appeals were rejected. Mark Stroman was pronounced dead at 8.53pm local time.

There have been 29 executions in the USA this year, and 1,263 since judicial killing resumed in the USA in 1977. Texas accounts for 472 of these executions, including eight this year.

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

This is the first update of UA 203/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR51/057/2011/en>

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