

# URGENT ACTION

## MARCEL WILLIAMS EXECUTED IN ARKANSAS

**Marcel Williams was executed on 24 April for a murder committed in 1994. He was one of two men put to death in Arkansas on 24 April, the first time that a state in the USA has carried out two executions on the same day since 2000.**

On 5 December 1994, police found the body of Stacy Errickson, a 22-year-old woman, in a shallow grave near Little Rock, Arkansas. **Marcel Williams**, then aged 24, was charged with abducting, raping and killing the victim, who had disappeared on 20 November 1994. He was brought to trial in January 1997. His lawyers provided no mitigating evidence.

In 2007, after the death sentence had been upheld in the state courts, a federal judge ruled that “by clear and convincing evidence” the performance of the trial lawyers had been constitutionally inadequate because of their failure to present the compelling mitigating evidence relating to their client’s background of poverty, deprivation and abuse. He ordered the state to give Marcel Williams a new sentencing hearing or change his sentence to life imprisonment without parole. The Court of Appeals reversed this, and held that that the judge should not have held an evidentiary hearing. The Court of Appeals therefore itself disregarded the evidence introduced at that hearing and upheld the death sentence. In 2010, the US Supreme Court declined to take the case, over the dissent of two Justices, who argued that the Court of Appeals’ opinion came “at an unacceptable cost to the interests of justice”.

After all appeals were rejected, and a brief stay of execution granted by a federal court judge on 24 April 2017 was lifted, the execution went ahead after the US Supreme Court declined to intervene. Marcel Williams was pronounced dead at 10.33pm, about 16 minutes after the lethal injection began.

After the execution, Governor Asa Hutchinson said: “After more than 20 years, justice has prevailed for the family of Stacey Errickson. I reviewed this case thoroughly and determined that clemency should not be granted. I appreciate the patience and long-suffering of the Errickson family through this ordeal. This is a serious and reflective time in our state and it is important for the Errickson family and all Arkansans to know that in this case our laws ended in justice.”

This was one of two executions carried out in Arkansas on the evening of 24 April. This is the first time a state in the USA has carried out two executions on the same day since 9 August 2000 (Texas). There have now been nine executions in the USA this year, three of them in Arkansas. This brings the number of executions carried out in the USA to 1,451 since 1976, when the US Supreme Court upheld revised capital statutes. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty unconditionally. Today, some 141 countries are abolitionist in law or practice.

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

This is the first update of UA 60/17. Further information: [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/5906/2017/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/5906/2017/en/)

Further information on UA: 60/17 Index: AMR 51/6117/2017 Issue Date: 25 April 2017

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