

URGENT ACTION

ALABAMA STAY OF EXECUTION HOLDS

The stay of execution granted by a state court judge for the purpose of assessing whether David Roberts, who has been on death row in Alabama for the past three decades, has a rational understanding of the reason for and reality of his punishment remained in place as the original execution date of 21 August 2025 came and went.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

The State of Alabama set an execution date for 59-year-old David Roberts for 21 August 2025 for a murder committed in 1992. The jury voted 7-5 that he be sentenced to life imprisonment without parole, but the judge overrode this and imposed the death penalty. In 2017, Alabama became the last state to end judicial override but did not apply the law retroactively. His case was also marked by ineffective legal assistance at his 1992 murder trial.

On death row, David Roberts has been diagnosed by prison doctors as having paranoid schizophrenia, with symptoms including psychosis, delusions and hallucinations. According to a psychologist who has reviewed the prison medical record, the severity of David Roberts' disorder and "how all-encompassing from the record it appears to be" called into serious question his competency for execution under US law, namely whether he has a rational understanding of the reason for and reality of his punishment. A state court judge ordered a temporary stay of execution pending a psychiatric evaluation after David Roberts' current lawyers filed a motion that he is not competent. The state asked for an "expedited" assessment, raising concerns about how quickly this evaluation would be conducted and how long the stay would remain in place.

On 15 August 2025, the Alabama Department of Corrections issued a news release in which it reiterated that it had agreed with the need to conduct the assessment, "provided that the competency evaluation is conducted on an expedited basis". The news release stated further that "the Alabama Department of Mental Health is currently in the process of conducting that evaluation and preparing a written report for submission to the court; however, it will not be completed by 21 August. The Department of Corrections understands that the State will not challenge the stay of execution until after the Marion County Circuit Court receives the written report of the competency evaluation. As a result, the Department anticipates that the execution scheduled for August 21 will not occur on that date.... Subject to the stay being lifted and all necessary approvals, the Department stands ready to resume preparations for the execution."

Alabama accounts for 81 of the USA's 1,637 executions since 1976. There have been 30 executions in the USA so far in 2025, the most in any year since 2014. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases unconditionally.

NAME: David Roberts

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 71/25

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/0138/2025/en/>

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