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Further information on EXTRA 63/00 (AMR 51/115/00, 25 July 2000) - Death penalty / Legal concern

USA (Texas) John Thomas Satterwhite, black, aged 53

John Satterwhite was executed in Texas on 16 August 2000. He was sentenced to death in 1979 for the murder of Mary Francis Davis during the robbery of a shop in San Antonio, Texas, in March of that year.

Among those who appealed for clemency was the European Union. The EU wrote to Governor George W. Bush: "The case of Mr. Satterwhite seems to us to particularly merit your clemency, as Mr. Satterwhite is considered by many experts to be both mentally ill (borderline paranoid schizophrenic) and mentally retarded. Furthermore, according to Mr. Satterwhite's defense, there was mitigating evidence withheld by the state and not made known to the jury. We urge you to demonstrate compassion with regard to this case.

"The EU considers that the execution of Mr. Satterwhite would be contrary to generally accepted human rights norms. In particular, it is our opinion that his execution would violate the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1989/64 of 24 May 1989 on the implementation of the safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty. As you know, this resolution recommends that United Nations Member States eliminate the death penalty for persons suffering from mental retardation or extremely limited mental competence, whether at the stage of sentence or execution. It would also be contrary to Resolution 2000/65 adopted at the last session of the United Nations' Commission on Human Rights, which specifically urges all States that still maintain the death penalty 'not to impose the death penalty on a person suffering from any form of mental disorder or to execute any such person'."

John Satterwhite becomes the 60th person executed in the USA this year, and the 29th in Texas. The United States has executed 658 prisoners since it resumed judicial killing in 1977; 228 of these executions have been carried out in Texas. John Satterwhite was the 141st person put to death since Governor George W. Bush took office in January 1995.

No further action is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.