

# URGENT ACTION

## SOUTH CAROLINA EXECUTION GOES AHEAD

Richard Moore, a 59-year-old Black man, was executed in South Carolina on 1 November 2024 for the murder of a white convenience store clerk in 1999. Richard Moore was unarmed when he entered the store. Both he and the clerk were shot after the clerk pulled two firearms on Richard Moore. The courts rejected final appeals and the Governor denied clemency.

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

On 21 October 2024, a federal District Court judge rejected a motion brought against the Governor Henry McMaster by Richard Moore's lawyers. The motion asserted that, in relation to consideration of clemency, Governor McMaster was not an "impartial", "open-minded", or "unbiased" actor. It pointed to the Governor's prior role as state Attorney General (2003-2011), but also to a public statement he made in 2022 as Governor. Asked in an interview with a news reporter in April 2022, whether he had already "made up [his] mind on whether to commute [Richard Moore's] sentence or not", Governor McMaster responded "Yeah, uh, I have no intention to commute a sentence. The jury made their decision. In this particular case, I've seen the record..." He added that "as Attorney General", he had been involved in capital cases and "had actually met some of the families while they were awaiting executions, and I think we have been unable to find anything that brings justice... outside of the death penalty". The federal judge ruled that "sufficient time" had passed since the Governor's statement "to allow him to both reevaluate his position and properly review any clemency petition filed by Moore". She ruled that she was "convinced" by the Governor's declaration that it was his "firm intention and commitment to take care to understand the issues presented", including in clemency petitions from individuals on death row facing execution dates. On 1 November, it was announced that Governor McMaster had denied clemency for Richard Moore after speaking with members of the murder victim's family.

Among the thousands of people appealing to Governor McMaster in support of clemency was the trial judge from Richard Moore's 2001 trial. In his letter to the Governor, he wrote: "Over the years, I have studied the case of each person who resides on death row in South Carolina. Richard Bernard Moore's case is unique, and after years of thought and reflection, I humbly ask you to grant executive clemency to Mr Moore as an act of grace and mercy". Two of the jurors from the trial also wrote letters in support of clemency, both giving his record of rehabilitation on death row.

A former Director of the Department of Corrections also called for clemency. In his letter to the Governor, he "As a proponent of the death penalty, I have never made such a recommendation". He explained that "commutation would have a positive influence on hundreds of offenders who would be impacted by Richard's story of redemption and positive example... His story and his manner of living would allow him to be an influential force for good" in prison. In addition, he wrote, "objectively reviewed, Richard's crime would never have been considered for the death penalty in most counties in our state". The "most compelling is the uncontested fact that Richard did not have a weapon when he entered the store where he shot [the victim]. So, even if he planned to steal something from the store, he certainly did not plan to commit armed robbery".

On 31 October 2024, the US Supreme Court dismissed Richard Moore's final appeal without comment or dissent.

Richard Moore was pronounced dead at 6:24pm on 1 November 2024, 21 minutes after the lethal injection process began. His lawyers issued a statement following the execution: "Tonight, the State of South Carolina needlessly took the life of Richard Moore... He was not a danger to anyone, and the State eliminated a glowing example of reform and rehabilitation... This execution underscores the flaws in South Carolina's death penalty system. Who is executed versus who is allowed to live out their lives in prison appears to be based on no more than chance, race, or status. It is intolerable that our State metes out the ultimate punishment in such a haphazard way".

There have been 21 executions in the USA this year, bringing to 1,603 the total number there since 1976 when the US Supreme Court upheld new capital statutes. South Carolina accounts for 45 of these executions, including two this year.

**NAME: Richard Moore**

**THIS IS THE FIRST AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 89/24**

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/8606/2024/en/>

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