

USA: Trump should grant clemency to federal death row prisoners



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Three executions scheduled in four days next week, with Lisa Montgomery set to be first woman executed by federal authorities in 67 years

Trump administration has pursued more federal executions than at any time since records began

'The federal government is dramatically and disgracefully out of step' - Bob Goodfellow

Ahead of three US federal executions scheduled to take place next week, Bob Goodfellow, Amnesty International USA's Interim Executive Director, said:

"President Donald Trump must grant clemency to those facing execution during the last days of his administration, and President-Elect Joe Biden should end the use of the federal death penalty immediately upon taking office. "By resuming the cruellest and most irreversible of punishments, the federal government is dramatically and disgracefully out of step with the general momentum."

On 12 January, Lisa Montgomery is set to become the first woman to be executed by the federal government in 67 years. On 14 January, Cory Johnson is also facing a federal execution, while a third federal prisoner - Dustin Higgs - is set to be executed the following day. Both Johnson and Higgs have reportedly tested positive for coronavirus in Terre Haute prison in Indiana.

The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and Amnesty opposes the death

penalty in all cases without exception - regardless of who is accused, the nature or circumstances of the crime, or the method of execution.

Despite an unprecedented flurry of US federal executions, the country executed fewer people last year than at any time for decades - with 17 executions overall, ten of which were federal ones. During 2020, more people on death row in the USA died of COVID-19 than were executed.

After a 17-year break in federal executions, the Trump administration resumed executions last year and has pursued far more federal executions than at any time since reliable statistics were first kept on the issue (1927). The cases of those selected for execution have been characterised by arbitrariness, ineffective legal representation, racial bias, and - in violation of international law and standards - have involved people with severe mental and intellectual disabilities. Amnesty has previously called on the US government to end the federal death penalty, and has called on it to withdraw any execution dates already set.

Amnesty's global reporting on the death penalty shows that the global trend shows a clear overall decline in capital punishment usage, with worldwide execution numbers decreasing during the past four years.

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