

# URGENT ACTION

## ROBERT MELSON EXECUTED IN ALABAMA

**Robert Melson was executed in Alabama late on 8 June after the US Supreme Court lifted a temporary stay it had imposed a few hours earlier. It was the second execution in Alabama in two weeks.**

**Robert Melson** was sentenced to death in 1996 for three murders committed during a robbery of a Popeye's restaurant in Gadsden, Alabama in 1994. He consistently maintained his innocence. His co-defendant, whose original police statement implicated Robert Melson, later claimed that he had not been involved.

On 2 June 2017, the US Court of Appeals for the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit granted a stay of execution pending resolution of a challenge brought by a number of Alabama death row prisoners against the use of midazolam as the sedative component of the state's three-drug protocol. The state appealed and on 6 June, without explanation, the US Supreme Court lifted the stay. Three of the Justices dissented against lifting the stay.

As the execution approached, Robert Melson's lawyers filed an emergency motion for another stay of execution, again on the midazolam question. The US Court of Appeals denied the stay on 8 June. Shortly before the scheduled time of the execution, the US Supreme Court issued a temporary stay to give it time to consider the motion, but it lifted the stay about three hours later. There were no dissents. The execution began shortly before 10pm and Robert Melson was pronounced dead at 10.27pm local time. Robert Melson declined to make any final statement.

Alabama's Attorney General, Steve Marshall, released a statement after the execution, saying: "Robert Melson's decades-long avoidance of justice is over. For twenty-three years, the families of the three young people whose lives he took, as well as a survivor, have waited for closure and healing. That process can finally begin tonight."

This was the 13<sup>th</sup> execution in the USA this year, bringing the total to 1,455 since judicial killing resumed in 1977 under new capital statutes approved by the US Supreme Court in 1976. Alabama accounts for 60 of these executions, the last one of which occurred on 25 May 2017. 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 127/17. Further information: [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/6407/2017/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/6407/2017/en/)

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