

URGENT ACTION

EXECUTION IN VIRGINIA AFTER CLEMENCY DENIED

Ricky Gray was executed in Virginia on the evening of 18 January after the governor denied clemency. He was sentenced to death for the murder of two young children during a burglary in 2006 and to life imprisonment for the murder of their parents.

On 17 January, Governor Terry McAuliffe denied clemency to **Ricky Gray**. In a statement, he said: "It is the Governor's responsibility to ensure that the laws of the Commonwealth are properly carried out unless circumstances merit a stay or commutation of the sentence. After extensive review and deliberation, I have found no such circumstances. I will continue to pray for all of the individuals and families affected by these tragic and horrible crimes."

In so doing, the governor rejected the call for clemency from more than 50 professionals working in the fields of mental health, the treatment of and advocacy for victims of violence and sexual abuse, and the prevention and treatment of substance abuse and addiction. The crimes "were horrible", they said, but "it also is beyond dispute that Ricky Gray was the victim of horrific sexual and physical abuse – starting at a very young age and continuing throughout his childhood, which led to drug abuse, crippling addiction, and ultimately criminal behaviour".

In 2016, a clinical psychologist who detailed the physical and sexual abuse which defined Ricky Gray's childhood, concluded that, because there was never any therapeutic intervention, Gray continued to suffer severe symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder into adulthood. His exposure to alcohol and drugs from an early age meant that substance abuse became his "only way to deal with overwhelming, traumatic experiences that marked his childhood".

On 18 January, the US Supreme Court refused to intervene on a final appeal challenging the lethal injection procedures, and Ricky Gray was put to death. He made no final statement, and was pronounced dead at 9.42pm, local time.

There have been two executions in the USA so far this year, bringing to 1,444 the number of executions nationwide since the US Supreme Court approved revised capital statutes in 1976. Virginia accounts for 112 of these executions. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, unconditionally. Today more than 140 countries are abolitionist in law or practice.

No further action is requested of the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update of UA: 14/17. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/5493/2017/en/

Further information on UA 14:17 Index: AMR 51/5528/2017 Issue Date: 20 January 2017

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

