

URGENT ACTION

EXECUTION HALTED FOR MAN WITH INNOCENCE CLAIMS

On 15 November, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals halted the execution of Rodney Reed and ordered the original trial court to consider new evidence in his case. The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles also supported delaying the execution and recommended that the Governor grant a 120-day reprieve. Rodney Reed has been on death row since 1998.

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

In 1998 Rodney Reed was convicted and sentenced to death in Texas for the murder of Stacey Stites on 23 April 1996. DNA testing of semen from her body was matched to the DNA of Rodney Reed. The victim was engaged to a white police officer and Rodney Reed initially denied knowing her, fearing being implicated in her murder. Several witnesses have since confirmed their relationship.

Expert opinion and other evidence call into question the state's theory of the crime and the forensic evidence on which it was based. The prosecution claimed Rodney Reed's DNA was left during a rape contemporaneous with the murder, occurring around 3am that day. The prosecution's forensic expert has since signed a statement indicating that his testimony was misused by the prosecution; that his estimate "should not have been used at trial as an accurate statement of when Ms Stites died"; and that the semen could have been left more than 24 hours before the victim's death, consistent with Reed's claim of consensual sex in that time frame. Three leading forensic pathologists have also concluded that there is no evidence that Stacey Stites was sexually assaulted rather than having engaged in consensual intercourse at least 24 hours earlier and was killed before midnight on 22 April 1996, and her body kept face down for some four to six hours before being transported to where it was found. One expert concluded that the forensic evidence renders the state's theory about time of death "medically and scientifically impossible". Another concluded "beyond a reasonable degree of medical certainty that, based on all of the forensic evidence, Mr. Reed is scheduled to be executed for a crime he did not commit". A 2015 execution date was stayed based on newly discovered evidence. However, Texas courts have repeatedly denied requests for DNA testing of that crime scene evidence and reset his execution for 20 November 2019.

On 15 November, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals halted the scheduled execution and ordered the court where he was originally tried to consider the new evidence. The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles supported delaying the execution and recommended that Governor Greg Abbott grant a 120-day reprieve for Rodney Reed.

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Rodney Reed (He/his/him)

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 146/19

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/1338/2019/en/>