

Washington, August 21, 2000

Mr. Walter S. Ray, Chairman  
The State Board of Pardons and Paroles  
Floyd Veterans Memorial Building  
Balcony Level, East Tower  
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4909

Dear Mr. Chairman,

*It has been brought to the attention of the fifteen member states of the European Union that Mr. Alexander E. Williams, a U.S. citizen, is scheduled to be executed on August 24 in Georgia.*

*France, as the current president of the European Union, together with Sweden, the subsequent president, and the European Commission, would like to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, and to all the members of the Board of Pardons and Paroles of Georgia, an urgent humanitarian appeal to spare the life of Mr. Alexander E. Williams.*

*Referring to the letter handed in to Mr. Roy Barnes, Governor of Georgia, on June 30, calling for a moratorium on the death penalty, and to the memorandum joined to it explaining the European Union's position, the European Union would like to draw your attention to this case.*

*The European Union is of the opinion that, in the case of Mr. Williams, several elements happen to be in contradiction with the minimum standards set forth in several international instruments.*

*- Mr. Williams was 17 years of age at the time of the commission of the crime. The European Union considers that, in those countries which have not yet abolished the death penalty, the death penalty should not be imposed on persons below 18 years of age at the time of the crime. This approach to juvenile justice is consistent with the spirit and the letter of several international human rights instruments, which expressly prohibit the execution of juveniles, specifically the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights.*

*- Mr. Williams suffers from a serious mental illness (paranoid schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder with bipolar features). The European Union is gravely concerned about the imposition of capital punishment on persons suffering from any form of mental disorder, considering that executions under these circumstances degrade the dignity and worth of the human person, and are also contrary to international human rights instruments, such as the United Nations Economic and Social Council 1984/50 resolution on the safeguards for the protection of persons facing the death penalty.*

*- Mr. Williams was not afforded all possible safeguards to ensure a fair trial, especially the possibility for his attorney, at the trial level, to present the jurors, who sentenced Mr. Williams to death, with either the significant evidence of childhood physical, mental and sexual abuse or of his mental illness, including at the time of the facts. Again, the European Union considers that this violates the strict conditions under which the death penalty may be used, as set forth in several international instruments.*

*We therefore respectfully urge you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of the Board of Pardons and Paroles of Georgia to take all the aforementioned factors into account and to exercise all powers vested in your office to commute Mr. Williams's sentence to any penalty other than capital punishment.*