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| AMR 51/9494/2025 - USA - Date: 12 June 2025 | | |
| FURTHER INFORMATION | URGENT ACTION | x-FI UA 056/25-1 |
| Oklahoma execution proceeds after stay lifted | | |
| USA (OKLAHOMA) | | |

John Hanson was executed in Oklahoma on the morning of 12 June 2025. A stay issued by a judge pending a hearing on a claim that the parole board hearing for clemency had been unfair was vacated on the order of the state Court of Criminal Appeals. A separate claim based on new evidence that the prosecution had withheld impeachment information about a key informant witness’s possible motive for cooperating with the state was rejected by the courts on procedural grounds.

On 6 June 2025, a judge issued a stay of execution following a challenge to the fairness of the parole board hearing on 7 May 2025 at which the Board had voted 3-2 against clemency. Before the hearing, John Hanson’s lawyers had asked that one of the members of the board be removed because he had been a Tulsa County prosecutor at the time of John Hanson’s resentencing there in 2006 when he was sentenced to death. The Chairperson of the Board declined the request, the hearing went ahead, and the Board member in question was one of the three «no» votes. The lawyers filed a lawsuit, which resulted in the judge issuing a temporary stay of execution pending review of the merits of the challenge. The state filed an appeal to the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals (OCCA) which on 11 June ruled that the judge had not had the authority to issue the stay, and that even if he had had such authority, the vote of the former prosecutor at the clemency hearing had been of «no consequence» because a 2-2 tied vote would have constituted a Board decision against clemency. The OCCA ordered the judge to vacate the stay, without the hearing he had scheduled into the matter.

Separately, John Hanson’s lawyers had filed a petition in the US Supreme Court with the claim that new evidence about the informant whose testimony about John Hanson’s role in the murder for which he was facing execution had been critical to the prosecution’s case against him. (The informant died before Hanson’s 2006 resentencing, but his trial statement from 2001 was read into the record for the resentencing jury without the defence being able to subject it to adversarial testing). During their reinvestiga-tion of the case for the clemency proceedings, two sources – the informant’s father and the informant’s best friend – were said to have revealed information indicating that in return for his testimony against John Hanson, the above best friend would receive favourable treatment on criminal charges that he was facing. The lawyers claimed that this information about the informant’s alleged incentive for cooperating with the state had been suppressed by the prosecution, so that «Mr Hanson’s didn’t know that [the informant] in fact had cooperated for personal gain – in the form of favourable treatment to his best friend». The OCCA had ruled on 9 June 2025 that the claim was «procedurally barred» on the grounds that it could have been raised earlier. On 11 June, the US Supreme Court declined to intervene, without comment or dissent.

The execution by lethal injection went ahead shortly after 10am local time on 12 June. Attorney General Gentner Drummond, who on 13 January 2025 announced his campaign to become the next governor of Oklahoma, issued a statement after the execution in which he said that «today, justice was finally served» and that «this case demonstrates that no matter how long it takes, Oklahoma will hold murderers accountable for their crimes». His statement again noted that the Biden administration had blocked the transfer of John Hanson from federal custody for execution. The transfer was approved under the new administration, pursuant to an executive order entitled «restoring the death penalty» signed by President Donald Trump on the day of his inauguration on 20 January 2025.

Oklahoma accounts for 129 of the USA’s 1,629 executions since 1976. There have been 22 executions in the USA this year, by lethal injection, nitrogen gas, and firing squad. The executions have been carried out in nine states (Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas). Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases unconditionally.

**No further action is requested. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.**