

Benenson Society Campaign against reinstatement of firing squad in Utah

The American State of Utah has re-introduced execution by firing squad. As countries such as Saudi Arabia, China and Iran, the debate in the United States is entering a critical phase. In 1996, 78% of Americans favoured the death penalty, and now support has declined to just over 50% and many States no longer have it.

Sr Helen Prejean of *Dead Man Walking* fame, notes that capital punishment “embodies the deepest wounds in our society.” In the US colour, poverty and lack of education are factors disproportionately present in those on death row. In other countries around the world the continuation of the use of the death penalty is often associated with policies of repression and the denial of human rights.

The argument about the place of capital punishment often revolves around its value as a deterrent. The evidence is pretty conclusive that it does not act as a deterrent. In those American States where capital punishment is still used crime rates have actually increased more than in those states that have abolished. Moreover, advances in forensics have shown that an alarmingly high number of those on death row were in fact innocent.

Recently, Pope Francis reissued the call for the abolition of the death penalty. "Today the death penalty is inadmissible, no matter how serious the crime committed," Francis wrote in a detailed

argument to the president of the International Commission against the Death Penalty. The Pope said capital punishment "contradicts God's plan for man and society," and "does not render justice to the victims, but rather fosters vengeance."

Please write to Gov. Gary Herbert of Utah to express your opposition to capital punishment (see attachment).

Suggested letter to Governor Herbert

Governor Gary Herbert

350 North State Street, Suite 200

PO Box 142220

Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2220

Dear Governor

As a member of the Benenson Society, a human rights advocacy group, may I express my disappointment at Utah's decision to reinstate the use of the firing squad.

At a time when the firing squad and other brutal methods of execution are too often seen on our screens in other parts of the world, it remains deeply troubling that capital punishment remains an accepted practice in parts of the United States. There is no evidence that capital punishment serves as a deterrent; rather it seems to stoke the fires of vengeance and represents a further brutalization of society and a diminishment of respect for human life.

I respectfully ask that Utah reconsider its position on capital punishment.

Yours sincerely.

You can also go to the governor's website – Contact Information – Governor Gary Herbert, and then go to Casework under the tab, Contact the Governor's Office, and copy this letter into an email to him.

Also you could message him on his Facebook page (Gary Herbert politician