

“An act of vengeance”: death row exoneree shocked now South Carolina is prepared to use firing squad for executions

South Carolina is now fully prepared to carry out executions using a firing squad, resulting in shock among anti-death penalty campaigners.

The state Department of Corrections says inmates on death row can now choose to be shot by a squad of three men with rifles among three execution options – the others being lethal injection and electric chair.

The completed renovations to perform this alternative method of execution were announced last week, costing over \$53,000.

“Whoever could write this in is a barbaric type of person,” asserts exonerated death row inmate, Herman Lindsey. “They want to bring these people to death but not because it’s justice. It’s an act of vengeance”.

Lethal injection continues to be the primary method of execution in states that have the death penalty. However, many of these states face difficulties in sourcing the drugs required to perform the procedure.

South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster signed a bill in 2021 making death row inmates choose between firing squad and electric chair if the option of lethal injection was not available.

There are currently thirty-five people on South Carolina’s death row.

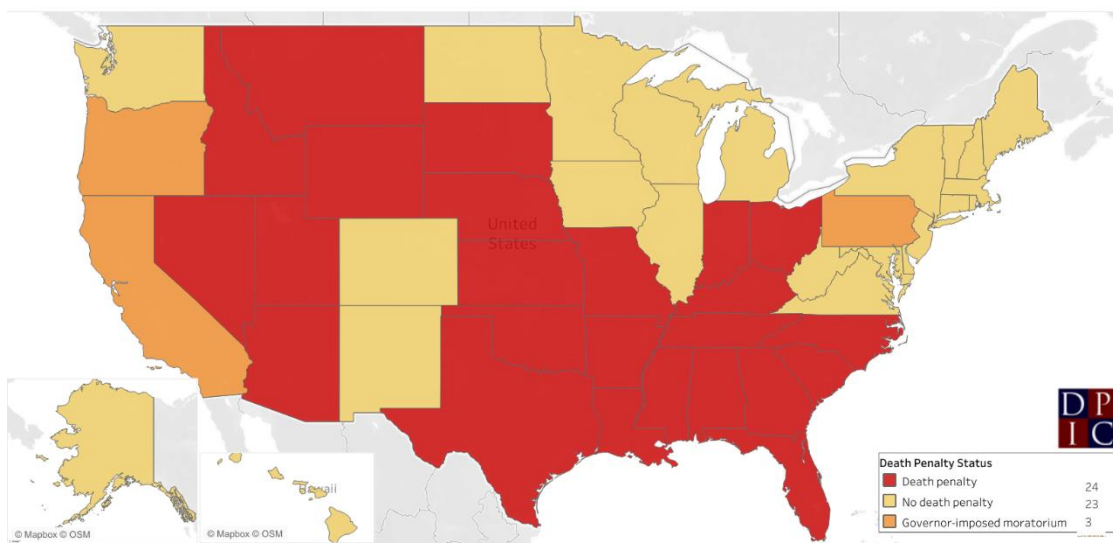
Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Utah are the only states that offer the option of firing squad to inmates on death row. Only three people have been executed by firing squad in over 40 years.

Anti-death penalty campaigners have shown disappointment over the recent development.

“Shocked and appalled would be the strongest reaction to it,” says Ben Cumming, Communications Director at Responsible Business Initiative for Justice. “It’s obviously incredibly cruel and violent”.

For Cumming, capital punishment “encapsulates everything that’s wrong,” with the U.S. judicial system; tainted by inefficiency, high costs, and error. “[For every eight people executed, one innocent person is exonerated](#). Which is a horrible error rate even when you’re not dealing with life and death”.

STATES WITH THE DEATH PENALTY 2021



Source: Death Penalty Information Center
[Interactive Chart](#)

Nonetheless, he is not disheartened by the recent confirmation of firing squad facilities in South Carolina in the fight against capital punishment.

Kate Rice

He holds a firm belief that the current wave of change in the U.S. is moving away from the death penalty: “It’s another opportunity to have a national and international conversation about why we continue to practice such an ineffective, racist, expensive, and alarmingly error prone practice”.

The U.S. is one of the 55 remaining countries that still use capital punishment as of 2022, and one of two G7 countries.

According to a [2021 Pew Research Center survey](#), most adults in the country still support the death penalty for people that have been convicted of murder.

However, a majority also believed the death penalty is not applied in a racially neutral way, and it does not have enough safeguards to prevent an innocent person from being executed.

Through his role at [Witness to Innocence](#) – an organisation that empowers exonerated death row survivors – ex-inmate Lindsey uses his first-hand experiences to fight against the use of capital punishment.

He shed light on what he believes is a lack of accountability that inmates face on death row. Many supposedly seek religion to find peace – a peace he says is not often awarded to those incarcerated for life.

“The death penalty eliminates consequences. A person that is sentenced to life in prison has to think about what they’ve done day-in-day-out”.

Lindsey saw many inmates waive their right to appeal and proceed with execution after finding peace: “they just don’t want to be incarcerated anymore”.

But, as highlighted by executive director of the Death Penalty Information Centre, Robert Dunham, these concerns are not equally held by the states that carry out capital punishment.

In fact, alternative methods to carry out the death penalty offer a solution to an ongoing problem in the sourcing of drugs to administer the lethal injection.

Leading pharmaceutical companies are not willing to produce these drugs given the immense cost and reputation that may come alongside it.

This results in states having to reportedly deceive pharmaceutical companies into supplying the drugs: “We’ve had states do these ghost purchases to obtain drugs, and we’ve had companies suing states because of exactly that”.

States thus turn to ‘compound pharmacies’ to fill in the gaps of production, but the organisations are still unwilling to provide them unless they are protected by secrecy laws.

In the face of anger among anti-death penalty campaigners, Dunham emphasises that finding alternatives like firing squads helps states that use capital punishment eliminate these hardships.

“The states that are most at a rush to carry out executions are less concerned with how problematic a method is than how available it is”.

Death sentences in the U.S., nonetheless, have steadily decreased over the last few decades. The amount of people on death row at the end of 2019 was down 29 percent from 2000, according to the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#).

Prosecutors in some states, such as [Florida](#), have vowed to not seek the death penalty due to concerns over its application.