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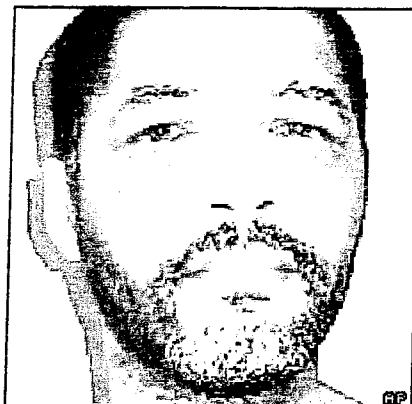
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Mentally ill man executed in US

The state of Arkansas has executed a man with a severe mental illness.

Charles Singleton, 44, was forcibly given anti-psychotic drugs which made him lucid enough under court guidelines to be put to death.



A diagnosed schizophrenic, he was given a lethal injection in the state's death chamber in Varner for killing grocery store worker Mary Lou York in 1979.

The Governor of Arkansas, Mike Huckabee, had refused to issue a stay of execution.

The European Union and Amnesty International had urged the governor to commute the death sentence, saying it was morally reprehensible to execute a person with a severe mental illness.

Singleton's lawyer, Jeffrey Rosenzweig, said the execution left him "frustrated, disappointed, saddened".

Appeals

While in prison, Singleton's mental condition worsened and he was forcibly given powerful drugs to alleviate the symptoms.

Lawyers for Singleton attempted to stop this, saying that it was not in their client's medical interest to be declared mentally competent enough to be executed.

Eligibility for execution is the only unwanted consequence of the medication

Federal court rejecting Singleton's appeal

But last year, the 8th Circuit federal court ruled that Arkansas could forcibly medicate Singleton. Handing down its decision, the court said that "eligibility for execution is the only unwanted consequence of the medication".

The US Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal of the lower court's decision.

Singleton was the first person Arkansas has executed this year and the 26th since the state reinstated the death penalty about 20 years ago.