

DEATH PENALTY ACTION

Advisory for Thursday, July 20, 2023

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Groups to Deliver Petitions, Hold Prayer Vigils Opposing Resumption of Alabama Executions

Montgomery, AL - A new group of Alabama faith leaders will join the broader coalition of Alabama organizations opposed to the death penalty for a prayer vigil in opposition to today's scheduled execution of Jimi Barber, today, Thursday, July 20, starting at 5pm CDT in front of the Alabama State Capitol and at other [locations across the state](#). The vigil at the Capitol and a simultaneous [worldwide Virtual Vigil](#) sponsored by Death Penalty Action will continue for as long as the 30-hour window allowing the execution to proceed continues.

EARLIER, at 10am CDT, leaders of several groups will deliver two petitions to Governor Ivey's office at the state Capitol. One petition calls for a halt to the execution of James Barber, and a second [demands that Alabama #PullBackTheCurtains](#) of the execution chamber, ensuring that public witnesses to every execution see the entire process, from the moment the prisoner enters the death chamber.

"The world is watching Alabama today because the last two men Alabama tried to execute, Kenneth Smith and Alan Miller, were poked and sliced for hours before time ran out, and those men are still alive today," said Abraham Bonowitz, executive director of Death Penalty Action. "All of this debate about execution methods and now asking trained medical professionals to violate the ethics of their professions is embarrassing to a country that considers itself a standard bearer for human rights. The prisoner notwithstanding, what about the lifelong trauma we are asking prison workers to take on?"

"While the wisdom and morality of the death penalty may be debated, we believe that the citizens of Alabama deserve that such a weighty act as execution must follow rules and laws, that no execution should include any possibility of torture, and that the activities of the State should always be transparent, just, ethical, and carried out as competently as possible," wrote Cynthia Carter and Luke Collins in an [op-ed published July 10 on AL.com](#) on behalf of the newly established "Alabama People of Faith Death Penalty Coalition."

In addition to a halt to all executions, the group continues to call for an external investigation into the capital punishment system in Alabama, and greater transparency in the execution process. The event is organized by numerous Alabama organizations, including a new coalition of Alabama faith leaders, The Alabama People of Faith Death Penalty Coalition, Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty, Death Penalty Action, and Equal Justice USA's Evangelical Network.

After the botched execution of Joe James, Jr. in July, 2022, and the failed execution attempts in September and October, concerned citizens continue to demand an independent investigation into the Alabama Department of Corrections execution protocol.

"What has changed about Alabama's execution protocol, other than simply adding more time to accomplish the task?" said vigil organizer Dawson Hicks, of Troy, Alabama. "We believe a third party must conduct the investigation. We oppose the death penalty for a variety of reasons including systemic and racial inequalities in Alabama's criminal legal system, but even supporters of executions want to make sure the state gets it right."

The group is gathering signatures on two petitions which they will deliver today. One petition opposes the execution of [Jimi Barber](#), and the "[Pull Back The Curtains](#)" petition continues a campaign started last year to demand greater transparency in Alabama executions. In light of the horrific torture of Joe James, Jr. and the subsequent failed executions, the groups launched the petition renewing the demand that media and other public witnesses observe the proceedings "from the moment a prisoner walks him or herself into the death chamber until they are declared dead."

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