



MINISTRY
AGAINST THE
DEATH
PENALTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 25, 2019

**Statement from Sister Helen Prejean in Response to the
Department of Justice's Planned Resumption of Federal Executions**

As I'm about to board a plane to Alaska to join the celebrations of 62 years without the death penalty in that state, I hear that the federal government plans to restart executions later this year after a 16-year hiatus.

For decades we have been gradually shutting down the machinery of death until it is rarely used, a geographical freak practiced by outlier counties. And now, here we have the federal government revving up the death machine.

The seemingly measured statement from the DOJ belies the fact that this is a rush to kill: they plan three executions in one week using a new, untested—and not yet approved—lethal injection protocol.

We know that the death penalty is deeply flawed, with a terrible history of racism in its implementation and an equally terrible history of errors, resulting in many innocents on death row. We also know that it does not offer the healing balm to victims' families that is promised.

And let's think about this power we have placed in the hands of governments, the power to take the life of our fellow citizens. What confidence can we have that our governments can be trusted with such power? When a penalty is absolutely final, surely we must seek a flawless system, and what government, what group of people, can deliver that?

It is disheartening that the administration has chosen to follow the death road, when the life road calls us to work for justice for all. Admittedly, following the life road demands more from us. It demands that we spurn myth-based thinking; that we educate ourselves on issues, policies and practice; that we reflect deeply; and that we commit ourselves to justice built from the ground up.

Sister Helen Prejean is known around the world for her tireless work against the death penalty and her bestselling book Dead Man Walking. Her organization, the Ministry Against the Death Penalty, is based in New Orleans but its reach is both national and international.

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