

UN experts urge US state of Virginia to halt execution of man with mental disorder

5 July 2017 – Two United Nations human rights experts have urged the US state of Virginia to cancel the planned execution on Thursday of a man with psychosocial disability.

“We urge the authorities to annul the death sentence against Mr. [William] Morva and to retry him in compliance with international standards related to due process and fair trial,” said the UN Special Rapporteurs on summary executions, Agnes Callamard, and on right to health, Dainius Pūras, in a [news release](#).

Their joint appeal to the Governor of Virginia was issued ahead of the planned execution of Mr. Morva by lethal injection.

The 35-year-old Hungarian-American was sentenced to death in 2008 for the murder of a hospital security guard and a Sheriff’s deputy.

According to the news release, a court-appointed psychiatrist diagnosed Mr. Morva with delusional disorder in 2014, and noted that his crimes may have been committed as a result of the delusions he was experiencing. During his trial, the jury was not told about his psychosocial condition and he did not receive reasonable accommodation to adjust the process to his individual needs.

“The denial of reasonable accommodation in detention can be considered a form of discrimination against him because of his mental health condition,” the experts said.

Mr. Morva’s condition is such that he has ceased all communication with his legal team, gravely hampering their ability to defend him as his execution approaches.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.