

**KANTAR MEDIA**

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## Support urged for death-row prisoner

**Paul Melia**

**THE** sister of a US death row prisoner has asked Irish people to support a ban on the death penalty.

Martina Davis-Correia, sister of Troy Davis who was sentenced to death in 1991, said people should support an **Amnesty International** call to ban executions, speaking at the organisation's annual conference in Dublin yesterday.

Troy Davis (42) has spent more than half his life in prison for the murder of Mark MacPhail, an off-duty policeman – a crime he has always denied committing.

He was playing pool with friends in Savannah in August 1989 when he heard shouting from a car park outside. A homeless man was being attacked, and he tried to intervene.

Off-duty policeman Mark MacPhail also ran to the scene before being shot dead. Within a day, Sylvester Coles, the man who had attacked the homeless man, went to the police and claimed he'd seen Troy shoot Mark MacPhail.

There was no DNA evidence, and a murder weapon was never found. Seven witnesses whose evidence was used to convict Troy later retracted their testimony, with several saying they police coerced them. The US Supreme Court has ruled Troy should get a hearing in federal court to examine new evidence but no date has been set

**Martina Davis-Correia, sister of prisoner Troy Davis, protesting with activists on O'Connell Street, Dublin, yesterday. COLLINS PHOTOS**





# Death row inmate protests his innocence more loudly each time execution is cancelled

The sister of Troy Davis will tell his story in Dublin tomorrow, writes **Lara Marlowe** in Washington

TROY DAVIS fasted and prayed, chose his last visitors, and gave instructions for his own burial. "We had to order a hearse," recalls Davis's older sister, Martina Davis Correia. "It was parked in front of the prison door; our sister passed out when she saw it. We were told we'd have to pay \$1,000 for the autopsy. The state was about to kill Troy, and they didn't know the cause of death? They told us we couldn't witness the execution because they needed the chairs for the family of the victim..."

Davis, who is black, will turn 42 this year. He has spent more than half his life in prison for the murder of Mark MacPhail, an off-duty white policeman, a crime he has always denied.

Three times, the state of Georgia has slated Davis for execution. In 2007, he was spared on less than 24 hours' notice. The second time, in September 2008, when the hearse was waiting, he was less than two hours from a lethal injection.

A month later, the process was stopped three days before execution. As **Amnesty International** reports, the condemned man and his family "have been subjected to the rollercoaster of hope and despair that is a hallmark of this cruel punishment".

Gemma Puglisi, who teaches public communication at the American University in Washington, spent a sleepless night after reading an article on the eve of Davis's first scheduled execution. She mobilised her class to join the worldwide campaign on behalf of Davis, and has visited him several times in prison.

"He's very inspirational," she

says. "Not bitter, always hopeful, and so grateful for anything anybody does to help him."

The US is the only country in the Americas that still carries out capital punishment, with 3,279 prisoners awaiting execution, according to the Death Penalty Information Centre.

Davis's experience is not unusual. Just this week, the execution of Hank Skinner, a death row inmate in Texas, was postponed an hour before he was to have died.

Davis was playing pool with friends in Savannah late at night in August 1989 when he heard shouting from the parking lot outside. A homeless man was being pistol-whipped by another man who was trying to steal his beer. Davis tried to intervene. An onlooker ran to the nearby bus station. Mark MacPhail, the off-duty police officer, was moonlighting as a security guard in the bus station and ran to the dark parking lot, where he was shot dead.

Within 24 hours, Sylvester "Red" Coles, the man who had attacked the homeless man, hired a prominent lawyer, went to the police and claimed he'd seen Davis shoot MacPhail. The murder weapon was never found, nor was there any DNA evidence. Seven of nine witnesses whose testimonies were used to convict Davis later refuted their own statements. Several said they were coerced by police.

"I don't think the police intended to frame Troy," says Martina Davis Correia.

"A police officer had been killed, and until Coles came in they had no lead. So they built a case against Troy, using homeless

people and drug addicts who hung around the bus station as witnesses. They said, 'We got the cop-killer off the street.' The police didn't even have a mugshot of Troy because he had a clean record. They took a photograph from my mother's album and put it on wanted posters, and within 24 hours, everyone hated Troy's guts. They wanted to save face at the expense of my brother's life."

The Davis family believe Coles shot MacPhail. **Amnesty** says it "does not know if Troy Davis - or this other man - is guilty or innocent of the crime". But Davis's conviction does not meet UN guidelines that demand "clear and convincing evidence", **Amnesty** says.

Richard Stack, author of *Dead Wrong: Violence, Vengeance and the Victims of Capital Punishment*, who like Gemma Puglisi teaches at the American University, notes one of every eight prisoners sent to death row is exonerated. "How can we possibly take a human life based on such a system? You wouldn't jump out of an airplane if one in eight parachutes didn't work. I chose the innocence issue because common ground can be found between liberals and conservatives. No one in their right mind wants to see an innocent person executed."

Pope Benedict XVI, Desmond Tutu and Jimmy Carter have all spoken out on Troy Davis's behalf.

Last August, the US Supreme Court ruled that Davis must be given a hearing in federal court to examine new evidence. No date has been set, and Davis continues to languish on death row.

Martina Davis Correia, a trained nurse who served in the

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1991 Gulf War, has campaigned tirelessly for her brother, even as she fights breast cancer. She will speak at **Amnesty** Ireland's annual conference at 3pm tomorrow in the Trinity school of nursing on Dublin's D'Olier Street.



Troy Davis:  
Seven witnesses who helped convict him later refuted their own statements

Title: New evidence to case of death row inmate Troy Davis

Source: NewsTalk

Media Type: BROADCAST

Programme: Saturday Edition

Presenter: Brendan O'Brien

Date: Saturday, 27-March-2010, 09:39:00

Duration: 12

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## New evidence to case of death row inmate Troy Davis

Inmate Troy Davis has been on death row since 1991, sentenced to death for shooting dead an off-duty policeman named Mark Allen McPhail in Savannah, Georgia. Now aged 41, he's awaiting execution by lethal injection but still protesting his innocence in the killing. His case has gone all the way to the US Supreme Court which has ordered not a retrial but a hearing of claimed new evidence. Troy Davis's sister Martina Correa, who has complained long and hard for his brother's retrial if not release, joins the show to give her views on the matter. She has discussed in the show the need to try the fresh evidences found which new witnesses claimed to reopen the case.

Martina Correa, Troy Davis's sister

Troy Davis, death row inmate

Savannah, Georgia

Mark Allen McPhail, murder victim

US Supreme Court

William Sessions, former FBI Director

Desmond Tutu, former South African Archbishop

Jimmy Carter, former US President

**Amnesty International**

Spencer Lawton, former Chatham County District Attorney

Michael Cooper, shooting victim

Sylvester 'Redd' Coles

Trinity College

Ireland

St. Patrick's Day

Title: Caller's line  
Source: RTE Radio 1  
Media Type: BROADCAST  
Programme: Today with Pat Kenny  
Presenter: Pat Kenny  
Date: Friday, 26-March-2010, 10:50:00  
Duration: 1

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## Caller's line

Pat reads a listener's comment in relation to Troy Davis case. He said that what she had heard was a sad story and another proof of inhumanity to man.

Pat Kenny, presenter  
Joe, a local

Title: Troy Davis case  
Source: RTE Radio 1  
Media Type: BROADCAST  
Programme: Today with Pat Kenny  
Presenter: Pat Kenny  
Date: Friday, 26-March-2010, 10:35:00  
Duration: 14

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## Troy Davis case

Everybody from the Pope, the former US President Jimmy Carter, Archbishop Desmond Tutu to the former head of the FBI, have called for the release of death row prisoner Troy Davis because they all believed him to be an innocent man. Troy Davis has come within hours of execution in the United States on three different occasions. He was sentenced to death in 1991 for the murder of an off duty police officer, even though there is no forensic or gun evidence linking him to the crime. His sister, Martina Correia Davis has campaigned for his release for 19 years and in the studio, she brought the programme back to the circumstances which led to her brother being arrested. She will be addressing a meeting on Sunday afternoon at the Trinity College School of Nursing and Midwifery, 24 D'Olier Street, Dublin. It's under the auspices of **Amnesty International.**

Jimmy Carter, former US President

Desmond Tutu, Archbishop

FBI

Troy Davis, prisoner

Martina Correia Davis, Troy's sister

CSI

Parole Board

US Supreme Court

[www.troyanthonydavis.org](http://www.troyanthonydavis.org)

**Amnesty International**

Trinity College School of Nursing and Midwifery