

No clemency for Georgia death row inmate whose last-minute appeal has garnered support of Former President Carter, Archbishop Tutu and 51 members of Congress

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Troy Davis, a death row inmate, has lost what may be his final attempt to avoid the death penalty. On Tuesday morning, the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles ruled that Davis should be executed for killing Mark MacPhail, an off-duty police officer, in 1989.

Davis' conviction has been repeatedly challenged, and this is the fourth time Davis has been scheduled for execution. The state parole board first granted him a stay in 2007, saying the execution should not proceed unless its members "are convinced that there is no doubt as to the guilt of the accused." In 2008, the Supreme Court stayed Davis' execution just 90 minutes before Davis was to be scheduled to be put to death. The Court later declined to hear his case, however. A few days before his third execution date, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals issued a stay of execution to consider arguments from his lawyers that new testimony that could prove his innocence had not been considered. The appeals court ultimately denied the claim, but gave time for Davis to take his argument directly to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ordered a federal court to once again examine the new testimony. But in June, a federal district court judge in Savannah, Georgia said Davis' attorneys had failed to demonstrate his innocence.

Davis' case has garnered national and international attention. Amnesty International delivered more than 630,000 letters last week asking the state board to stay this most recent execution date. Former President Jimmy Carter, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and 51 members of Congress were among those who wrote letters asking for clemency. Hundreds of people have turned to social media to express their opposition to Davis' execution. They have created Facebook pages and others are Tweeting using #TooMuchDoubt, a hashtag created by Amnesty International and the NAACP.

Many opponents of Davis' execution believe there is too little evidence linking Davis to Officer MacPhail's death. Since Davis' conviction in 1991, seven of the nine witnesses against him have recanted or contradicted their testimony. Others who did not testify say another man at the scene admitted to the shooting. No murder weapon was ever found and no DNA evidence or fingerprints link him to the crime. However, with this latest decision from the state board, Davis and his lawyers may be out of options to prevent the tomorrow night's deadline. Davis' legal appeals are exhausted.