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## **Graham Execution a Direct Violation of International Law, says Bar Human Rights Committee**

The execution last night of Gary Graham by lethal injection in Texas was today condemned by the Bar Human Rights Committee. The BHRC expressed disappointment that the United State's contempt for international law has not been publicly criticised by the British government.

The Bar Human Rights Committee had called upon the Foreign Secretary Rt. Hon. Robin Cook to speak out against the execution after the British Government stated in 1999 that it took an "unequivocal stance" against the death penalty. So far, the Government has failed to comment, despite the clear capacity for influence given this government's special relationship with the US.

The BHRC argued that the execution directly violates international law as at the time of the commission of the offence, Gary Graham was a juvenile. Judicial execution of persons who committed offences while under the age of 18 are prohibited under international law by Article 6(5) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Attempts by the US government to opt out of its obligations under Article 6 (5), preventing the execution of juveniles, have been declared unlawful by the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

Graham had spent 19 years awaiting execution for a crime committed when aged 17. His death last night constitutes inhuman or degrading treatment and a violation of international law and the US Constitution.

"In addition to concerns surrounding Graham's conviction, this execution must be condemned as it represents a clear violation of international law by the United States" said Stephen Solley QC. "The British Government has stated that it intends to use its diplomatic clout against the death penalty, yet it has consistently failed to do so."

The BHRC has made similar appeals concerning other juvenile executions but the British Government has failed to make public its stated objectives in any particular case. Graham was the fourth person this year to be executed in the US for crimes committed as a juvenile and around 70 prisoners on death row are awaiting execution for crimes committed when they were 16 or 17.

The Bar Human Rights Committee has called for the Foreign Secretary to make good his claim to an ethical foreign policy, and to pressure the United States to halt the execution of juveniles.

"The British Government has to bridge the credibility gap between aspiration and action," said Stephen Solley QC. "This case clearly called for intervention."

**-ENDS-**

### **Note to Editors:**

1. The Bar Human Rights Committee is the international human rights arm of the Bar of England and Wales. It is concerned with defending the rule of law and internationally recognised human rights standards.
2. For further information please contact the Bar Human Rights Committee on 020 7395 9508 or email [bhrc@compuserve.com](mailto:bhrc@compuserve.com) or Philip Sapsford QC on 020 7353 6802 or Shandwick on 020 7222 2525