

Beat: News

Texas executes Mexican national in defiance of world court ruling

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USPA News - A Mexican national convicted of rape and murder was executed in Texas on late Wednesday despite a 2004 ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that found he had been improperly denied representation from Mexico after his arrest, officials said. Ramiro Hernandez-Llanas, 44, was pronounced dead at 6:28 p.m. local time on Wednesday at Huntsville Unit in Walker County, Texas.

The execution by lethal injection took place after the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, a federal appeals court, and the U.S. Supreme Court all refused to stop the execution. The execution is controversial because the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in 2004 that the United States had failed to provide consular notification and access to 51 Mexican nationals, including Hernandez, as is required under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations which was signed by the United States decades ago. Three other Mexican nationals also covered by the ICJ's Avena judgment have previously been executed in the United States, leading the world court to issue a ruling that the United States had violated the treaty and the court's own orders. One of those previously executed was Edgar Arias Tamayo, who was executed in Texas on January 22 despite appeals from both the Mexican and U.S. governments. After Tamayo's execution, the U.S. government said it had urged Texas to delay the execution to review Tamayo's conviction and sentence. "The United States compliance with our international obligations under Avena is critical to our ability to ensure consular access and assistance for our own citizens who are arrested or detained by foreign governments, as well as to maintain cooperation from foreign governments on a broad range of law enforcement and other issues," U.S. State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf said in January. Mexico's Foreign Affairs Ministry said it condemned Wednesday's execution of Hernandez, calling it a "clear violation" of the ICJ ruling more than a decade ago. It said it "strongly protested" the U.S. government's "failure" to halt the execution in Texas, adding that the United States was obliged to review and reconsider the conviction and death sentence of Hernandez. "The Mexican government expresses its deepest condolences to the family of Mr. Hernandez-Llanas and will continue to provide them with consular assistance during this process," the ministry said. "The Mexican government again urges the U.S. to take effective action to prevent the state of Texas, or any other, from carrying out the execution of any Mexican nationals in contempt of the Avena judgment and in breach of its international obligations." Hernandez was convicted of killing a former university professor who had hired him to help with renovations on his home. Hernandez broke into the man's residence on the night of October 15, 1997, and beat him to death with a metal bar, after which he tied up the victim's wife and raped her repeatedly. Speaking in the death chamber moments before Wednesday's execution, Hernandez indicated he had no remorse for his actions. "I'm happy and I would like to say on behalf of my family, I love y'all," he said. "I am happy. I look into my family's eyes, and I see sadness. Don't be sad, I'm happy. I am sorry for what I have done. Be mindful that I am happy till the end." Later in his statement, however, Hernandez added: "God is the only witness that knows what happened that night. I, Ramiro Hernandez, say this with lots of love to young people: listen to your parents, please. Live your life to the fullest, you only live your life once. ... I say this with a lot of love and happiness. I have no pain and no guilt. All I have is love. Love will win." Lawyers for Hernandez had argued that he was mentally impaired and rejected "faulty" testimony from psychologists at trial. Wednesday's execution raised the number of people executed in the United States so far this year to 16, six of them in Texas.

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