

Convicted cop killer takes case to media

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A convicted murderer facing execution next week proclaimed his innocence on Monday, while advocates continue to raise questions about his involvement in the 1989 slaying of a Savannah police officer.

"I think it's a sad day in Georgia ... that they are willing to try and kill an innocent man and don't even want to hear the new facts of the case," Troy Anthony Davis told reporters during a Monday afternoon conference call arranged by Amnesty International USA, which opposes the death penalty.



Special

[\(ENLARGE\)](#)

The courts have refused to allow Troy Davis to present new evidence, despite prosecution witnesses who have renounced testimony.

Davis was sentenced to death in 1991 for the fatal shooting of Savannah police Officer Mark Allen MacPhail outside a Greyhound bus station. The young officer, who was shot before he could draw his gun, was responding to reports of a man being pistol-whipped.

But seven of the nine prosecution witnesses who implicated Davis or named him as the killer have since renounced much of the testimony used to convict him. So far, courts have refused to allow Davis to present the new evidence.

The case has drawn national — and international — attention, particularly in some European countries where the death penalty has been abolished.

Notable activists including Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu, Sister Helen Prejean (the nun whose work was featured in the film "Dead Man Walking"), entertainer Harry Belafonte and "M.A.S.H." actor Mike Farrell also have joined the quest to halt the execution.

Davis' appeal has been hampered by the federal Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, passed to streamline what critics regarded as endless appeals of death sentences. Judges have agreed with the state's position that Davis failed to present the evidence years ago when his appeal was in the state courts. But Davis' lawyers say many of the recantations didn't occur until after his state appeals had been exhausted.

Now, Davis' advocates are taking their case public.

It's rare for a death row inmate in Georgia to speak to reporters; many death penalty lawyers prefer to fight the case in court — not the media. But Amnesty International USA arranged the impromptu conference call with broadcast and print reporters around the nation, including The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Davis spoke calmly and softly during the call.

"I'm trying to maintain my faith and I'm praying that God will step in and soften a judge's heart so they will agree to hear my evidence and grant me a new trial," said Davis, 38. "But it's a stressful ordeal."

Davis outlined his contention that he was framed by the real shooter at the chaotic scene.

Davis said he was just trying to break up an argument between two men in a parking lot near the bus station.

"They bought his story and just ran with it," Davis said of the man he says was the shooter, who identified him as the killer. "To cover his crime, he tried to shift the blame on me."

One of Davis' final hopes rests with the state Board of Pardons and Paroles. His lawyers will ask for clemency at a closed hearing on Monday. Today, Amnesty International USA is helping organize a news conference in front of the parole board's offices in downtown Atlanta across from the state Capitol.

Davis' lawyer and relatives, along with two witnesses who recanted their testimony and a third person who implicated another man in the shooting, are expected to attend, according to Amnesty International USA. Other religious and civil rights leaders will join them.

The group then will present about 3,000 letters and postcards in support of Davis' bid for clemency, including appeals from Tutu and others.

The state Department of Corrections is planning to carry out the lethal injection at its prison in Jackson at 7 p.m. on July 17.