Ohio carries out third execution since lifting of moratorium

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Ohio executed Brett Hartman on Tuesday morning. His execution was the third in the state this year and the third since Ohio ended a six-month moratorium on capital punishment. Hartman was pronounced dead at 10:34 a.m. after being injected with a single lethal dose of pentobarbital at the state prison in Lucasville.

Hartman was convicted of the 1997 murder of Winda Snipes, who was found dead in her Akron apartment on September 9, 1997. She was stabbed 138 times, with her throat slit and both her hands cut off. Hartman maintained his innocence until the end.

The condemned inmate's family issued a statement Tuesday in which they professed Hartman's innocence and asked for additional testing of crime scene evidence. Hartman's attorney David Stebbins read from the family's statement: "We hope that the taking of Brett's innocent life might serve as a wake-up call to the flaws in our legal system."

Hartman came within a week of execution in 2009, but was temporarily spared when a federal court ruling allowed him to pursue his innocence claim, which later failed. A new execution date set for last year was postponed due to a federal lawsuit over Ohio's execution policy.

US District Court Judge Gregory Frost halted all executions in Ohio as the state faced numerous challenges to its method of execution, including at least one instance of a botched execution. No executions took place in Ohio between May 17 and November 15, 2011.

On September 15, 2009, death row prisoner Romell Broom was granted a temporary reprieve after he was stuck with needles at least 18 times in an attempt by prison authorities to administer a deadly dose of sodium thiopental. Broom screamed out in pain for 90 minutes before the execution was halted. Broom is still on death row and challenging his death sentence.

Ohio prison authorities have revised their execution method several times following accusations that it was unnecessarily painful. Although Judge Frost has criticized state officials for deviating from their revised execution procedures, he ruled that the execution of Mark Wiles could go forward last November 15.

Brett Hartman's execution is the third to take place since the lifting of the moratorium. The Ohio Parole Board unanimously denied Hartman's requests for clemency three times, citing the brutality of the murder he was convicted of committing and the "overwhelming evidence" of his guilt.

Hartman's defense attorneys long argued that crucial evidence from the crime scene and the victim's body had never been tested, including fingerprints allegedly found on a clock and a mop handle, which might have pointed to another suspect in the murder.

They also argued that, even if these innocence claims were not accepted, he should still have been spared because of the effects of Hartman's "remarkably chaotic and nomadic early childhood," including being abandoned by his mother and being left on an isolated Indian reservation with his aunt.

Hartman was the 38th person put to death in the US this year and the third in Ohio. Since Ohio resumed executions in 1999, 48 individuals have been sent to their deaths. The state has scheduled six executions for 2013. Ohio is the only state with execution dates set for 2014, with five scheduled.

This week, Texas is set to execute two men: Ramon Hernandez on Wednesday and Preston Hughes on Thursday.

Since the US Supreme Court reinstituted the death penalty in 1976, 1,315 people have been executed. Thirty-five US states continue to carry out the barbaric

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practice. Those killed over the last three and a half decades have included 12 women, individuals convicted of crimes committed when they were juveniles, the mentally impaired, and foreign nationals denied their consular rights.

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