

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – JULY 14, 2011**

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**WHAT: Shooting survivor sues Gov. Perry over violation of Victims' Rights, demanding stay of Mark Stroman execution**

**WHEN: 10AM, July 14, 2011**

**WHERE: Main entrance, Heman Marion Sweatt, Travis County Courthouse, 1000 Guadalupe, Austin, TX 78701**

A man who survived being shot in the face in 2001 will sue Texas Governor Rick Perry and other officials today, demanding respect for his rights as a victim of violent crime. A press conference will be held on the steps of the courthouse.

Rais Bhuiyan was shot by Mark Stroman in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Fueled by his addiction to methamphetamine, which he used to medicate his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Mark Stroman was close to the edge when he caught his girlfriend having an affair. Then came 9/11, and Mark Stroman responded to the fact that his half-sister was killed in the World Trade Center by setting out to take revenge on "Arabs". He killed two innocent men and tried to kill Mr Bhuiyan.

The previous Dallas District Attorney pushed forward with the death penalty without consulting the victims for their views. Mark Stroman's lawyers put up a desultory defense, and he was on death row in record time – convicted after less than a day.

Due to his strong religious belief in the importance of forgiveness, Mr Bhuiyan never wanted to see Mark Stroman die. Supported in his campaign by the families of the two other victims, Mr Bhuiyan has recently criss-crossed Texas in search of a politician willing to listen to him.

Mr Bhuiyan was kept in the dark for a decade concerning his entitlements under the Texas Victims' Bill of Rights. He has belatedly learned of his rights, every one of which has been ignored. He has the right to mediation with Mark Stroman, who is willing to meet with him and apologize for his crimes, but the Texas Department of Criminal Justice has not responded to the request.

This has been just one part of a catalogue of failings, which also included a lack of meaningful mental health assistance with the trauma he suffered after being shot in the face.

Governor Perry decreed that April 10-16, 2011, would be Victims' Rights Week. See <http://www.texansforequaljustice.org/docs/cvrw11.pdf>. "I encourage all Texans," he said, "to join in this effort by learning more about victims' rights and supporting victims of crime whenever possible. We can help our fellow Texans on the road to recovery with compassion and respect."

With Mark Stroman's execution scheduled for 20 July, time is extremely short.

**Rais Bhuiyan** said: "Along with families of the other victims in the case, I have been ignored and sidelined, year after year. My parents taught me to believe passionately in compassion and respect. If Governor Perry really means it when he says victims' rights are a priority, we need action rather than hollow words."

**Khurrum Wahid**, Mr Bhuiyan's lawyer, said: "It is ironic that Rais Bhuiyan was shot by someone thinking it was a blow against Muslims, yet Islamic law would respect Rais' desire for forgiveness. The State of Texas has failed him as a victim. After suffering such a traumatic experience, surely we should respect Mr Bhuiyan, rather than traumatise him again. We often hear "What about the rights of the victim!" The victim has rights even when his voice is not one of vengeance but one of forgiveness."

\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\*

#### **Notes to editors**

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Under Texas law, the victim has "the right to request victim-offender mediation coordinated by the victim services division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice" (Tex. Code Crim. Proc. 56.02(a))

Among his 'Principles for a Stronger Texas', Gov Perry states that he "focused resources on certain key areas including [...] victims' rights" <http://www.governor.state.tx.us/priorities>.