

# Rolando Ruiz Defense Fund

On 10<sup>th</sup> July 2007, just before 6 p.m., my dear friend Rolando Ruiz was standing in the corridor outside the Huntsville death chamber in Texas, waiting to be executed by lethal injection after 16 years of solitary confinement. In 2000, I had met Rolando through the Swiss human rights organization LifeSpark and we became very close friends before long. Along with his parents and two more close relatives, I was waiting in the room next door to witness the execution. In 1992, deep inside the San Antonio drug scene, high on several substances and under pressure from his dealer, Rolando had committed a murder. In his trial, appearing before the jury as the drug-addicted son of a Mexican immigrant and poorly defended by an incompetent state-appointed lawyer, he had not stood a chance and had been sentenced to death. Now, in the days before the execution, his family and friend said good-bye to a warm-hearted, caring, life-loving man who had very little in common with the Rolando of those past times. In his cell, he had matured as a human being and a Christian, and we all considered ourselves blessed to know him. In Huntsville, the tension and dread of the impending, incomprehensible moment grew unbearable until, all of a sudden, we were informed that 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals in San Antonio had ordered a stay of execution. Without a chance to speak to anybody, Rolando was taken back to his cell at the Livingston Polunsky Unit and left to deal with the shock by himself. We drove home seized by a strange mixture of confusion and gratefulness.

The people pulling the strings in the background and literally effecting the stay of execution at the last minute work for the Texas Defender Service in Houston – a remarkable idealistic organization of lawyers and law students who choose to contribute to the fight against the death penalty by pro-bono work for death-row inmates. Rolando's case was handled by Morris Moon. I got to know Morris personally the day after the scheduled execution, and I was deeply touched by his generous, authentic commitment to the cause. Since July 2007, Morris and his team have kept on working on Rolando's case, going to great lengths to review his trial. They have uncovered a number of scandalous irregularities, which, as a next step, they intend to present to the court in San Antonio, the goal being to re-open the second half of the trial, i.e. the passing of the sentence. The best-case scenario would be for Rolando's death penalty to be converted into a life sentence. This would bring enormous improvement to Rolando's life: no more impending execution, no solitary confinement, a chance to work, being moved from Livingston to his home town of San Antonio, visits by family and friends with no armoured glass and handcuffs.

Morris Moon and his team have contributed to Rolando's story way beyond the call of duty. It's Rolando's deep desire to be able to pay at least for a part of their work. He is not allowed to own any money himself, and his family is not in a position to help financially. This is why I have instituted the small Rolando Ruiz Defense Fund – just a simple Swiss Post Account, whose entire content will regularly be contributed to the work done by the Texas Defender Service on Rolando's case. A small proportion of the donations may be spent on providing transportation for Rolando's family for personal visits.

Swiss Post Account 87-61834-7

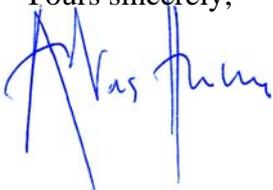
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Any contribution – single or periodical – is highly welcome. Thank you so much, also in Rolando's name! For any more information or updates on Rolando's story, please don't hesitate to contact me on [rolando@andreas-hausammann.ch](mailto:rolando@andreas-hausammann.ch) or +41 (0)71 220 16 54. More documentation is available on

[www.andreas-hausammann.ch/rolando.htm](http://www.andreas-hausammann.ch/rolando.htm)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andreas Hausammann', written over a light blue horizontal line.