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Is Death Row a Form of 'Psychological Torment'?

To the Editor:

"[Lifelong Death Sentences](#)," by Adam Liptak (Sidebar column, Nov. 1), says that "foreign courts have ruled that living for decades under the threat of imminent execution is a form of psychological torment." But the condemned do not live under threat of imminent execution; the long delays give the lie to that claim.

The condemned have advance notice of each execution date and learn to discount them with each successive stay. As my visual documentation of life on death row in several states shows, most often life on death row is more laid back than the daily life of convicted murderers sentenced to life.

Mr. Liptak cites the observation by the Columbia law professor James S. Liebman that we produce too many death sentences. True. But as Mr. Liebman and I declared in a joint op-ed [article](#) in The Houston Chronicle (May 25, 2003), opponents and death-penalty proponents can find common ground by narrowing the death penalty to the worst of the worst. Then we should shorten the time it takes to execute these monsters.

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