

URGENT ACTION

TWO MEN SENTENCED TO DEATH IN BELARUS

Two men were sentenced to death in Belarus on 20 January after their sentences of life imprisonment were quashed on appeal. They are the first two people to be sentenced to death in 2018, bringing the total number of people on death row in Belarus, according to the Belarusian authorities, to seven.

On 20 January, Minsk City Court sentenced Viachaslau Sukharko and Aliaksandr Zhylnikau to death. In March 2017, the two men were found guilty of murdering three people in December 2015 and were sentenced to life imprisonment. In July 2017, following an appeal by the prosecutor, the Supreme Court sent their case back to the lower court for a retrial, which resulted in them being sentenced to death. If the Supreme Court upholds the sentences, as is likely, and the presidential pardon is also denied, Viachaslau Sukharko and Aliaksandr Zhylnikau will be at risk of imminent execution.

Despite mounting domestic and international pressure, Belarus remains the only country in Europe and Central Asia which continues to apply the death penalty. In addition to Viachaslau Sukharko and Aliaksandr Zhylnikau, five other men are believed to be on death row in Belarus.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, as a violation of the right to life, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Please write immediately in Belarusian, Russian or your own language:

- Urging President Lukashenka to halt any planned executions and immediately commute the death sentences of Viachaslau Sukharko and Aliaksandr Zhylnikau and all others sentenced to death in Belarus;
- Calling on President Lukashenka to establish an immediate moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.
- Stress that, while we are not seeking to downplay the seriousness of the crimes committed, research shows that the death penalty does not have a unique deterrent effect and that it is the ultimate denial of human rights.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 MARCH 2018 TO:

President

Alyaksandr Lukashenka
Vul. Karla Marksa 38
220016 Minsk, Belarus
Fax: +375 17 226 06 10
+375 17 222 38 72
Email: contact@president.gov.by

**Salutation: Dear President
Lukashenka**

Chairman of the Commission on

Clemency for the President of Belarus
Valeriy Mitskevich
Vul. Karla Marksa 38
220016 Minsk, Belarus
Fax: +375 17 226 06 10
+375 17 222 38 72
Email: contact@president.gov.by

Salutation: Dear Mr. Mitskevich

And copies to:

Human Rights Centre Vyasna
Vul. Merzhinkovo, 8-26
220012, Minsk, Belarus
Email: viasna@spring96.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR SERGEI ALEINIK Embassy of the Republic of Belarus, 6 Kensington Court W8 5DL, 020 7937 3288, Fax 020 7361 0005, uk.london@mfa.gov.by, www.uk.mfa.gov.by

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Death sentences are often imposed in Belarus after unfair trials which include forced “confessions”; they are implemented in strict secrecy and without giving adequate notice to the condemned prisoners themselves, their families or legal representatives. The authorities refuse to return the bodies of those executed to their relatives or even tell them where they are buried. Executions are carried out despite requests from the UN Human Rights Committee to the government not to do so until the Committee has considered the cases. In November 2012, the Human Rights Committee found that the application of the death penalty in Belarus violates the human rights of those condemned and their families.

By failing to publish full information about the use of the death penalty, including comprehensive statistics about the number of death sentences imposed and executions carried out, the Belarusian authorities prevent informed public debate about the issue and hamper the movement towards abolition.

Amnesty International supports calls, included in six resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly since 2007, for the establishment of a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty. As of today, 142 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice.

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