

URGENT ACTION

FOURTH DEATH SENTENCE ISSUED BEFORE NEW YEAR
Kiryl Kazachok was sentenced to death by the Gomel Regional Court, in southeast Belarus, on 28 December. His was the fourth death sentence to be issued in Belarus in 2016.

Kiryl Kazachok was sentenced to death by the Gomel Regional Court, in southeast Belarus, on 28 December. He was found guilty of killing his two children on 31 January 2016. He called the police following the incident, before trying to kill himself.

His lawyer will appeal the death sentence. If the sentence is upheld by the Supreme Court, Kiryl Kazachok will appeal directly to the President for clemency. It is highly probable that the sentence will be upheld and his clemency denied, leaving him at risk of execution shortly afterwards.

No warning is given of the date or time of execution and no final meeting with relatives is granted. Death row inmates are executed with a shot to the back of the head. In accordance with Belarusian law, their bodies are not returned to their families for burial, nor is the location of the burial site disclosed.

Belarus is the only country in Europe and Central Asia which continues to use the death penalty.

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

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

- Urging President Alyaksandr Lukashenka to commute the death sentence of Kiryl Kazachok and all those on death row in Belarus;
- Calling on the President to establish an immediate moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty;
- Stress that whilst we are not seeking to downplay the seriousness of the crime, research shows that the death penalty does not deter crime more than other forms of imprisonment and is the ultimate denial of human rights.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 FEBRUARY 2017 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

Prosecutor General
 Alyaksandr Kaniuk
 Vul. Internatsionalnaya 22
 220050 Minsk, Belarus
 Fax: +375 17 226 42 52 (Say "fax"
 clearly if voice answers)
 Email: info@prokuratura.gov.by
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

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.

AMNESTY
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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kiryl Kazachok allegedly strangled his daughter, aged nine, and son, aged 17, at their home on 31 January 2016. Following the incident, he went to his estranged wife's apartment, where she lives with their eldest son, and told her what he had done. He then threw himself from the fourth-floor balcony but survived and was taken to hospital. Tests revealed that he had a high percentage of alcohol in his blood at the time. After being treated for his injuries he was transferred to a detention centre in March 2016.

Belarus sentenced four people to death in 2016 and executed at least four men, two of whom were sentenced in 2015. Kiryl Kazachok was the last person to be sentenced to death in 2016; a year which saw a shocking rise in executions following no executions in 2015. The hiatus in executions had led many, both within Belarus and the international community, to hope that a moratorium may have been introduced.

Despite courting the international community with two conferences on the issue of the death penalty in Minsk in March and December 2016, Belarus continued to show a flagrant disdain for the global and regional trend towards abolition. Siarhei Ivanou, who was sentenced to death in March 2015, was the first person to be executed in 2016, in May. The disturbing news broke at the end of November of the executions of another three men, who were all believed to have been shot on 5 November. The families of Ivan Kulesh, Siarhei Khmialeusk and Hyanadz Yakavitski did not find out that their loved ones had been executed until weeks after the event. Amnesty International remains concerned that Siarhei Vostrykau is at imminent risk of execution. Siarhei Vostrykau, who was sentenced to death in May 2016, was the last remaining known death row inmate before Kiryl Kazachok was sentenced.

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.

As of today, 140 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice.

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