

Belarus and Uzbekistan: the last executioners - The trend towards abolition in the former Soviet space

Make Europe and Central Asia a death penalty - free zone !

Among the countries that have emerged from the break-up of the Soviet Union, **Belarus** and **Uzbekistan**, are the last ones that still carry out executions. Flawed criminal justice systems in both countries provide a fertile ground for judicial error. Amnesty International receives credible allegations of unfair trials and torture and ill-treatment, often to extract "confessions", on a regular basis from both countries.

Death row conditions

Conditions for prisoners under sentence of death in the region fall far short of international standards. In Belarus, for example, death row prisoners are not entitled to any exercise in fresh air and electric lighting is on day and night.

Secrecy surrounding executions

Neither death row prisoners nor their relatives are informed of the date of execution in advance, denying them a last chance to say goodbye. The body of the prisoner is not given to the relatives for burial and relatives are not informed of the place of burial. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the criminal-execution codes still stipulate that the place of burial is not disclosed.

Complying with requests by the UN Human Rights Committee

Uzbekistan has executed at least 14 death row prisoners, ignoring requests by the UN Human Rights Committee to stay the executions while it considered their cases. Belarus has not implemented the Committee's recommendations in cases from that country.

Failure to publish statistics

The authorities have consistently failed to disclose comprehensive statistics on the use of the death penalty, including figures of death sentences and executions, in Belarus, Uzbekistan and other countries.



Iskandar Khudoberganov is currently under sentence of death in Uzbekistan. He was detained in Tajikistan and handed over to Uzbekistani law enforcement officials on 5 February 2002 on suspicion of involvement in bomb explosions in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, three years earlier. He claims to have been tortured and given drugs against his will. In November 2002 the UN Human Rights Committee requested the Uzbek authorities to stay the execution while the Committee considered the case.

Iskandar Khudoberganov's sister told Amnesty International: "The police took away all photographs we had of my brother. The only photo that is left is his student ID photograph."

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OUR CAMPAIGN

Amnesty International believes that the death penalty violates the right to life and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. **We are campaigning to make Europe and Central Asia a death penalty-free zone.**

OUR DEMANDS

- Immediately stop all executions in Uzbekistan and Belarus
- Commute all death sentences and refrain from passing any more
- Treat death row prisoners and their families humanely
- End the secrecy surrounding the death penalty
- Stop torture
- Abolish the death penalty in law

AI's findings are contained in the report *Belarus and Uzbekistan: The last executioners-The trend towards abolition in the former Soviet space*, AI Index: EUR 04/002/2004 available on the AI website at www.amnesty.org.

To take part in the campaign, or for further information, contact your local Amnesty International section (see box right) or:

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