

URGENT ACTION

BELARUS UPHOLDS ANOTHER DEATH SENTENCE

Siarhei Khmialeuski, who was sentenced to death in Belarus in February, is at imminent risk of execution.

On 6 May, the Supreme Court of Belarus upheld the death sentence passed by the Minsk Regional Court in February. **Siarhei Khmialeuski** was found guilty of the murder of at least two people in Minsk region whose charred bodies were found in a private apartment with multiple stab wounds in the neck and head in November 2014. It is believed that a third man, who Siarhei Khmialeuski suspected of witnessing him leaving the apartment, was pushed into a deep pit by Siarhei Khmialeuski and later died of his injuries.

Siarhei Khmialeuski was initially sentenced to life imprisonment but the sentence was later changed to the death penalty at the request of the prosecutor. Siarhei Khmialeuski will now appeal to the President for clemency as his final legal recourse but it is unlikely to be granted. Since President Alyaksandr Lukashenka came to power in 1994, he has granted clemency in only one case. If clemency is denied, Siarhei Khmialeuski could be executed soon after. In Belarus, death row prisoners are executed with a shot to the back of the head. Families are not given prior notice of the date of execution or granted a final visit. In accordance with Belarusian law, the bodies are not returned to the family for burial nor is the burial site disclosed.

Siarhei Khmialeuski's legal representatives will file a complaint to the UN Human Rights Committee. However, Belarus continues to ignore requests by the Committee to stay executions while it reviews the case. Since 2010, Belarus has executed eight people whose cases were pending with the Committee, most recently on 18 April when Belarus executed Siarhei Ivanou with whom Siarhei Khmialeuski reportedly shared a cell on death row.

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

- Urging President Lukashenka to halt all planned executions in Belarus and immediately commute the death sentence of Siarhei Khmialeuski and all others sentenced to death in Belarus;
- Call on him to establish an immediate moratorium on executions with a view to abolition of the death penalty;
- Urge him to end the secrecy surrounding the death penalty and repeal Article 175 of the Belarusian Criminal Executive Code to allow bodies of executed prisoners to be returned to families for burial or the burial site to be disclosed.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 JULY 2016 TO:

President

Alyaksandr Lukashenka
Vul. Karla Marxa 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 someone answers)
Email: info@prokuratura.gov.by

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have issued statements this year urging Belarus to respect the right to life for each of its citizens and to join a global moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its full abolition. Its continued use stands in direct opposition to any intended progress of Belarus' parliamentary working group on the prospect of abolishing the death penalty which was established in February 2010. The working group continues to report to international observers on the use of the death penalty in Belarus.

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.

The Belarusian authorities argue that there is strong public support for the death penalty in Belarus. However, 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.

Name: Siarhei Khmialeuski

Gender: m

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