

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Belarus: Amnesty International condemns another death sentence execution**

Amnesty International condemns the reported execution of death row prisoner Alyaksandr Zhylnikau. On 13 June, his lawyer visited the prison and was told that Alyaksandr Zhylnikau had “served his sentence.” As per common practice in Belarus, his family were not notified of the scheduled execution and will likely not receive official information of his execution for some time to come. It is also expected that his body will not be returned to them for burial nor the location of his burial site be disclosed.

Secrecy around and treatment of the families of death row prisoners are particularly cruel features of the use of the death penalty in Belarus and have drawn condemnation from the UN and regional human rights bodies including the Council of Europe, as well as the international community at large.

“On the eve of hosting the European Games in Minsk, the Belarusian authorities have once again flaunted their total disregard for human rights and regional and global trends towards abolition of the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment,” said Marie Struthers, Director of Amnesty International’s Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office.

Alyaksandr Zhylnikau’s execution took place despite requests from the UN Human Rights Committee to stay his execution while it considered his case, in violation of Belarus’ obligations under international human rights law.

Concerns are growing for Alyaksandr Zhylnikau’s co-defendant and fellow death row prisoner Viachaslau Sukharko. Both men were sentenced to death after a retrial in January 2018, after being found guilty of the murder of three people in 2015. While there is no confirmation of Viachaslau Sukharko’s current fate, it is usual in Belarus for co-defendants to be executed at the same time.

Amnesty International calls on the Belarusian authorities to immediately confirm the circumstances and whereabouts of Alyaksandr Zhylnikau and Viachaslau

Sukharko and provide all relevant information on their cases to their families and legal representatives. If Viachaslau Sukharko is still alive, the authorities must commute his death sentence without delay. They must also introduce an immediate moratorium on all executions as a first step towards abolishing the death penalty.

“This barbarity must end,” continued Marie Struthers. “As the last executioner in Europe and the entire former Soviet region, Belarus cannot continue to fly in the face of global trends towards abolition and expect the international community to play ball.”

Other than Viachaslau Sukharko, at least one other prisoner remains on death row in Belarus. Alyaksandr Asipovich was first sentenced to death on 9 January 2019 and his sentence was upheld on 14 May 2019.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. It is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and violates the right to life. More than two-thirds of the world’s countries are abolitionist in law or practice. In 2018, 174 out of 193 UN member states were execution-free.