

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 49/01/98

16 January 1998

Further information on UA 216/97 (EUR 49//07/97, 18 July 1997) - Fear of execution / Death penalty

BELARUSIgor Ganya, aged 34
F. Verega (first name not known)
Two other people, names not known

Amnesty International is gravely concerned that at least four people may face execution in Belarus unless appeals against their death sentences are upheld by the Supreme Court or President Lukashenka.

Press reports claim that five people were sentenced to death by the Minsk City court in the first nine months of 1997: two of these people are believed to be Igor Ganya and F. Verega, who were sentenced to death in June 1997 for murder.

On 12 January 1998 Radio Liberty reported that a total of nine people had been sentenced to death in Hrodno region in 1997, and that seven of them had already been executed. The names of the two people not yet executed are not known.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to official information provided to the UN Human Rights Committee in October 1997, in the first six months of 1997 17 people were sentenced to death and 12 were executed in Belarus.

In October 1997, the head of the clemency department at the presidential administration, Vladimir Samusev, told Amnesty International that the 38 people who were sentenced to death in Belarus in 1996 had all been executed. He said that in the first nine months of 1997, 24 appeals for clemency were turned down by President Lukashenka and that six more people were awaiting the President's decision on their appeals for clemency in October 1997. Amnesty International fears that all of these people may have been executed, but no official information on the number of executions in Belarus is available.

As far as Amnesty International is aware, President Lukashenka has not granted clemency to a single death row prisoner during his two and a half years in office.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian, English or your own language:

- urging President Lukashenka to grant clemency to Igor Ganya, F. Verega, to the two people sentenced to death in Hrodno in 1997 and not yet executed, and to all other prisoners at present on death row in Belarus;
- calling for an independent investigation into allegations that Igor Ganya and F. Verega were forced to confess their guilt under physical duress, for the findings to be made public and for any law enforcement officer found guilty of ill-treatment to be brought to justice in accordance with the norms of international law;
- expressing sympathy with the victims of violent crime and their families, but referring to the 1988 Study for the United Nations on the death penalty which concluded that the death penalty was not an effective deterrent for violent crimes;

- expressing concern at the very high rate of executions in Belarus during 1996, and urging the Belorussian authorities to declare an official moratorium on executions.

APPEALS TO:

The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenka
Respublika Belarus
220010 g. Minsk
pl. Nezavisimosti, Apparat Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus
Prezidentu Respubliki Belarus, Lukashenka A.H
Telegrams: Prezidentu, Minsk, Belarus
Faxes: + 375 172 235825 (if voice ask for fax)
Salutation: Dear President

The Head of the Department for Applications for Clemency and Citizenship at the President's Administration, name not known
Respublika Belarus
220010 g. Minsk
Apparat Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus
Otdel po voprosam pomilovaniya i grazhdanstva
Zaveduyushchemu otdelom
(i.e. to the Head of department)
Faxes: + 375 172 235825 (if voice ask for fax)
Salutation: Dear Head of Department

The Chairman of the Supreme Court of Belarus, Meshislau GRIB
Respublika Belarus
220030 g. Minsk
Ul. Lenina, 28
Verkhovny Sud Respubliki Belarus
Predsedatelyu GRIBU M.
Salutation: Dear Chairman

COPIES TO:

The Procurator General of Belarus, Aleh BOZHELKO
Respublika Belarus
220050 g. Minsk
Ul. Internatsionalnaya, 22
Prokuratura Respubliki Belarus
Generalnomu prokuroru
BOAHELKU A.
Faxes: + 375 172 264166

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Ivan ANTONOVICH
Respublika Belarus
220030 g.Minsk
Ul. Lenina, 19
Ministerstvo inostrannykh del
Respubliki Belarus
Ministry ANTONOVICH I.
Faxes: + 375 172 274521

and to diplomatic representatives of Belarus accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 March 1998.