

URGENT ACTION

TWO MEN SENTENCED TO DEATH

The Belarusian authorities have sentenced two men to death for murder. Brest regional court sentenced 30-year-old Vasily Yuzepchuk to death on 29 June; Minsk regional court sentenced 25-year-old Andrei Zhuk to death on 22 July.

Vasily Yuzepchuk and another man were detained in January and charged with first-degree murder, following the murder of six elderly women, between November 2007 and January 2008. On 29 June, they were found guilty by Brest regional court and Vasily Yuzepchuk was sentenced to death. His lawyer will appeal to the Supreme Court. The second man was charged as his accomplice and sentenced to life imprisonment.

In connection with a separate crime, Andrei Zhuk and a second man were charged with the murder of a man and a woman who were killed on 27 February 2009. They were killed while carrying money to pay the salaries of employees at the company they worked for. On 17 July, Andrei Zhuk and the second man were found guilty by Minsk regional court; on 22 July, the court sentenced Andrei Zhuk to death and the second man to life imprisonment.

The death sentences were announced shortly after the 23 June vote by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to restore Special Guest Status to the Belarusian Parliament, on the condition that Belarus declared a moratorium on the imposition of the death penalty. Belarus is the last country in Europe and the former Soviet Union which is still carrying out executions.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian, Belarusian, English or your own language:

- Urging President Lukashenka to commute immediately the death sentences of Vasily Yuzepchuk and Andrei Zhuk to terms of imprisonment;
- Calling on him to establish an immediate moratorium on the use of the death penalty, in line with UN General Assembly resolution 63/168, adopted on 18 December 2008.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 SEPTEMBER 2009 TO:

President

Alyaksandr Lukashenka
ul. Karla Marxa 38
220016 Minsk
Belarus

Salutation: Dear President Lukashenka

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Belarus is a country from the former Soviet Union of approximately 10 million people, located between the **eastern** border of the European Union and Russia. By abolishing the death penalty, the Belarusian authorities would remove the last major obstacle to making Europe entirely free of the death penalty.

Prisoners on death row in Belarus are told they will be executed only moments before the sentence is carried out. They are shot in the back of the head, and sometimes more than one bullet is required. The body is not handed over to the family, who are often informed only after the event, and the place of burial is kept secret, causing them further distress.

In Belarus, the use of the death penalty is compounded by a flawed criminal justice system. There is credible evidence that torture and other ill-treatment are used to extract confessions; condemned prisoners may not have access to effective appeal mechanisms; they and their relatives are subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment because of the secrecy surrounding the death penalty.

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