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RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND UKRAINE: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES  
GOVERNMENTS TO IMMEDIATELY END EXECUTIONS

Amnesty International today urged the Russian and Ukrainian Governments to honour their pledge to the Council of Europe by immediately stopping executions and abolishing the death penalty.

This follows the adoption of two resolutions by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 29 January, which strongly condemn the continuing executions in these countries and threaten not to accept the credentials of the two countries' delegations at the Council's next session unless they stop executing prisoners.

"Although both the Ukraine and the Russian Federation delegations claimed during the Council of Europe debate to have stopped executions, reports, particularly from Ukraine, suggest that this is not the case. We are disturbed by the secrecy surrounding the alleged decision to stop executions in Russia and Ukraine," the human rights organization said.

Despite the adoption on 28 June 1996 of a Parliamentary Assembly resolution calling on both countries to honour their commitments to introduce a moratorium on executions, Amnesty International has received alarming reports that executions have continued in the two countries.

The organization received reports in July 1996 claiming that approximately 100 people had been executed in Ukraine so far in the year. Since then four further executions have been confirmed by Amnesty International, three in August and one in October 1996.

In the Russian Federation, at least 140 prisoners were executed in 1996, 103 of them after the country joined the Council of Europe. There is strong evidence to suggest that those executed include people who were innocent of the crimes for which they were convicted.

Amnesty International is calling on the authorities of both countries to confirm publicly the existence of an official moratorium on executions.

The two governments should also reveal publicly the exact number of prisoners on death row at present and the number of executions which took place since they joined the Council of Europe, including the names of those executed and the places where they were buried.

Amnesty International urges Ukraine and the Russian Federation to take the following steps to implement their commitments to the Council of Europe:

- The presidents of both countries should immediately take the political decision not to sign any more execution orders. This decision should be formalised by the central governments issuing public orders to all prison governors that no further executions are to be carried out.
- The two governments should also begin to prepare public opinion for accepting the abolition of the death penalty. The two states should sign and ratify Protocol No.6 to the European Convention on Human Rights.
- The governments and parliaments should prepare and enact legislation to remove the death penalty from the countries' penal codes. The constitutions should also be amended to exclude the death penalty

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