

EXTERNAL

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Fear of Imminent Execution

14 March 1996

LITHUANIAKestotis Saviskas, aged 20

Amnesty International fears that Kestotis Saviskas may be executed within the coming week. According to a report in the Norwegian daily *Dagbladet* of 2 March 1996, Kestotis Saviskas appealed for clemency to the President of Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas, on 27 February 1996. A government source has reportedly stated that his clemency appeal is likely to be considered within two weeks, which means that the Lithuanian President could decide whether or not Kestotis Saviskas will be executed in the coming week. This decision may be influenced by a visit of the Norwegian Prime Minister, Ms Gro Harlem Brundtland, to Lithuania on 18 and 19 March, as Amnesty International understands that she has promised to raise the death penalty issue with the authorities.

Kestotis Saviskas was sentenced to death last year for the murder of three people.

Executions in Lithuania are carried out by shooting.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The death penalty in Lithuania is retained for one crime only - premeditated murder under aggravated circumstances. Since Lithuania gained independence in March 1990, seven death sentences have been carried out, of which six since December 1993. In all cases Amnesty International had appealed to the Lithuanian authorities for clemency. The organization has been informed by the Lithuanian authorities that currently the issue of whether the death penalty will be included in the new Criminal Code is under debate in the Lithuanian Parliament.

Amnesty International has repeatedly sought information from the Lithuanian Government about the mechanisms that exist to ensure that prisoners' internationally guaranteed right to have their conviction and sentence examined by a court of higher jurisdiction is respected. The organization does not know whether in the case of Kestotis Saviskas an appeal has taken place. Petitions for clemency are considered by the President of the Republic of Lithuania on the recommendation of the Clemency Commission.

Amnesty International has consistently pressed the Lithuanian authorities to review the use of the death penalty as a step towards its total abolition and to impose a moratorium on death sentences and executions until this review has taken place.

Amnesty International is further concerned about the conditions in which prisoners on death row are kept. According to Amnesty International's information, Kestotis Saviskas has remained inside his cell for 24 hours a day for 10 months.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English, French, German or in your own language:

- appealing for the commutation of the death sentence passed on Kestotis Saviskas;
- explaining Amnesty International's opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances without exception;
- urging the Lithuanian authorities to impose a moratorium on death sentences and executions pending adoption of the new criminal code.

APPEALS TO:

President

Algirdas Brazauskas
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2026 Vilnius
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Faxes: +370 2 614544

Telegrams: President Brazauskas, Vilnius, Lithuania

Salutation : Dear President

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

Mindaugas Stankevicus
Prime Minister
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Chairman of the Supreme Court

Pranas Kuris
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Minister of the Interior

Virgilijus Bulovas
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Parliamentary Committee for Human and Citizens' Rights and Nationalities Affairs

Mindaugas Stakvilevi_ius
Chairman
Parliamentary Committee for Human and Civil Rights
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and to diplomatic representatives of Lithuania accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.