

PUBLIC

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Death Penalty / Fear of imminent execution

BELARUS at least 54 people - names unknown, and
Ihar Mironaw, 22

A programme on Belarussian national television, broadcast on 11 April 1998, revealed that at least 55 prisoners are currently on death row in Belarus. All could be facing imminent execution unless granted clemency by President Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

Thirteen people, including Ihar Mironaw (see UA 42/98, EUR 49/02/98, 11 February 1998), have reportedly been sentenced to death in Belarus since the beginning of this year. The prisoners referred to in the television programme are being held in Prison No. 1 in the capital, Minsk. All were apparently convicted on charges of premeditated murder.

Commenting on the latest death row figures, Alyaksandr Ivanowski, the Belarussian Deputy Procurator-General, cited rising murder rates and said that the government had to resort to capital punishment "because of the circumstances and not because it wanted to be cruel".

President Lukashenka stated on 22 January 1998 that he has only pardoned one person facing the death penalty since he came to power in 1994. He also stated that 30 executions were carried out in Belarus in 1997. According to the 11 April television broadcast, 53 death sentences were passed in 1996 and 55 in 1997.

Information regarding the death penalty is classed as a state secret in Belarus, and executions are carried out in secret. It is therefore unlikely that the names of those on death row or any information regarding their appeals will be made public. This could therefore be the only possibility for international opinion to influence the outcome in these cases.

It is not clear whether there are currently other people on death row elsewhere in Belarus.

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

- urging the President of Belarus to grant clemency to the 55 people and all others currently on death row in the country and who are possibly facing imminent execution, including Ihar Mironaw, and to commute their death sentences;
- calling for the names of all 55 people revealed to be awaiting execution in Minsk to be made public and for the secrecy surrounding the procedures relating to the death penalty to be lifted;
- expressing deep 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 1997.

APPEALS TO: (Please note: fax tones can be difficult to obtain, particularly out of office hours when fax machines may be switched off.)

The President of Belarus, Alyaksandr Lukashenka
Respublika Belarus
220016 g. Minsk
ul. Karla Marksa, 38, Administratsia Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus
Presidentu Lukashenka A.H
BELARUS
Telegrams: Presidentu Lukashenka, 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, Vladimir Samusev
Respublika Belarus
220016 g. Minsk
ul. Karla Marksa 38, Administratsia Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus
Otdel po voprosam pomilovaniya i grazhdanstva
Zaveduyushchemu otdelom
Samusevu, V.
BELARUS
Telegrams: Vladimir Samusevu, Administratsia Prezidenta, Minsk, Belarus
Faxes: + 375 172 235825 (if voice ask for fax)
Salutation: Dear Mr Samusev

COPIES TO:
The Chairman of the Supreme Court of Belarus, Valentin Sukalo
Respublika Belarus
220681 g. Minsk
Ul. Lenina, 28
Verkhovny Sud Respubliki Belarus
Predsedatelyu Sukalu V.
BELARUS
Telegrams: Predsedatelyu, Verkhovny Sud, Minsk, Belarus
Faxes: + 375 (172) 27-25-14
Salutation: Dear Chairman

The Procurator General of Belarus, Aleh Bozhelko
Respublika Belarus
220050 g. Minsk
Ul. Internatsionalnaya, 22
Prokuratura Respubliki Belarus
Generalnomu Prokuroru
Bozhelku A.
BELARUS
Telegrams: Generalnomu prokuoru, Minsk, Belarus
Faxes: + 375 172 264166
Salutation: Dear Procurator General

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Ivan Antonovich
Respublika Belarus
220030 g.Minsk
Ul. Lenina, 19
Ministerstvo inostrannykh del
Respubliki Belarus
Ministru Antonovich I.
BELARUS
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 29 May 1998.