

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Penalty

19 May 1992

REPUBLIC OF LATVIA: Aleksey VOLKOV

Amnesty International is concerned that Aleksey Volkov may soon be executed if his petition for clemency, currently pending with the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia, is turned down.

Aleksey Volkov's appeal against the death sentence was rejected in November 1991 which indicates that, in his case, the whole appeals procedure is at a very advanced stage and he faces imminent execution.

Aleksey Volkov was sentenced to death on 11 September 1991 for murder. He is currently being held in a prison in Riga, the country's capital.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Recent information on the death penalty in the Republic of Latvia was given to Amnesty International by the Minister of Justice in January 1992. The Minister of Justice reported that the death penalty was currently in force for nine offences committed under aggravating circumstances, but he did not specify them. He explained that the criminal code was currently being reviewed by a committee of lawyers and members of the Supreme Council, including the question of whether the death penalty should be retained or abolished. He further stated that of the nine people sentenced to death in 1989, five were executed and one was granted clemency; in 1990, five people were sentenced to death, three were executed and one was granted clemency; in 1991 four people were sentenced to death, three of whom were executed. All those sentenced to death and executed had been convicted of premeditated murder under aggravating circumstances. Death is by shooting.

If an appeal against a death sentence is unsuccessful, the sentence can only be reduced by a judicial review or by a petition for clemency. Death sentences may still be carried out, however, before a judicial review has been completed.

Clemency may be granted by the Chairman of the Supreme Council on the recommendation of the Clemency Commission of the Supreme Council. Since recognition of Latvia's independence by the State Council of the Soviet Union on 6 September 1991, a person sentenced to death no longer has the possibility of his/her case being considered by the federal USSR authorities. This means that there may be a much shorter time between sentencing and execution.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telephone calls/faxes/telegrams/express and airmail

letters:

- appealing for commutation of the death sentence passed on Aleksey VOLKOV;
- explaining Amnesty International's opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances without exception;
- asking that the authorities in the Republic of Latvia stop carrying out further executions and urging that they consider complete abolition of the death penalty.

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APPEALS TO:

1. The Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia

Anatolijs Gorbunovs

Jekaba 11

Riga 226811

Republic of Latvia

Telegrams: Chairman Supreme Council, Riga, Latvia

Telephone: + 7 013 32 29 38

Faxes: + 7 013 21 16 11

[Salutation: Dear Chairman]

2. The Chairman of the Clemency Commission of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia

Jekaba 11

Riga 226811

Republic of Latvia

Telegrams: Chairman Clemency Commission, Riga, Latvia

[Salutation: Dear Chairman]

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

The Procurator General of the Republic of Latvia,

Janis Skrastins

Procurator General of the

Republic of Latvia

Komunaru bulv. 6

Riga 226050

Republic of Latvia

Telegrams: Procurator General, Riga, Latvia

Telephone: + 7 013 32 00 85

[Salutation: Dear Procurator General]

and to diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Latvia in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat or your Section Office if sending appeals after 30 June 1992.