

EXTERNAL

28 June 1994

Aleksandras Gladkovas

Republic of Lithuania

Amnesty International is concerned that Aleksandras Gladkovas was sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of Lithuania on 14 June 1994. He was convicted of the murder of two people and had a previous conviction for attempted murder.

Background information about the death penalty in Lithuania

The death penalty is retained in Lithuania for one crime only - premeditated murder under aggravated circumstances. Four executions are known to have been carried out since restoration of independence. Three of these executions have taken place since December 1993 and were all carried out within five months of sentencing. In all cases Amnesty International had appealed to the Lithuanian authorities for clemency. According to an official of the Supreme Court, 13 death sentences were passed in 1993, nine of which were commuted. Two other prisoners - Jozas Maksimavicius (sentenced in December 1993) and Antanas Varnelis (sentenced in February this year) - are currently under sentence of death. Amnesty International continues to appeal to the Lithuanian authorities for commutation of their sentences.

Capital cases in Lithuania are tried before the Collegium of Criminal Cases of the Supreme Court. Petitions for clemency are considered by the President of the Republic of Lithuania on the recommendation of the Clemency Commission, composed of the Ministers of Justice and of the Interior, the Chairman of the Supreme Court and the Procurator General. Amnesty International is particularly concerned that the length of time between the passing of a death sentence and the rejection of a petition for clemency is becoming shorter and shorter. This suggests that appeals in capital cases are not being heard. The organization has in the past sought information from the Lithuanian authorities 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 response that Amnesty International has received from the authorities leads the organization to believe that no such mechanism currently exists in the Republic of Lithuania.

Amnesty International has consistently pressed the Lithuanian authorities to review the use of the death penalty as a step towards its abolition and to impose a moratorium on death sentences and executions until this review has taken place. In January 1994 the organization was informed by the Minister of Justice that: "At present, the issue of capital punishment and the question whether it should be provided for in the new Criminal Code is being discussed by the Seimas (Parliament) and society. A working group preparing the new Criminal Code has no commonly accepted opinion on this issue". Amnesty International believes that the recent spate of executions is particularly deplorable in view of the fact the issue of the death penalty is due to be discussed by parliament.