

URGENT ACTION

BELARUS SENTENCES TWO MEN TO DEATH

Ihar Hershankou and Siamion Berazhnoy were convicted and sentenced to death by the Mahiliou Regional Court, in eastern Belarus, on 21 July 2017. Theirs are the second and third death sentences imposed in Belarus in 2017.

On 21 July 2017, the Mahiliou Regional Court, in eastern Belarus, sentenced **Ihar Hershankou** and **Siamion Berazhnoy** to death. The two men were found guilty of murdering six people between 2009 and 2015 with the aim of appropriating their property. The case has become widely known as the “black real estate agents” case.

They will appeal their death sentences before the Supreme Court in the coming weeks. If the appeal fails, they can request clemency from President Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Since 1994 the Supreme Court has upheld all death sentences that came before its review and President Lukashenka has only once granted clemency, which means that Ihar Hershankou and Siamion Berazhnoy will likely be at risk of execution in the near future.

In Belarus, no notice is given of the date or time of execution, neither before nor after they are carried out, and no final meeting with relatives is granted. Death row prisoners are executed with a shot to the back of the head. In accordance with Belarusian law, their bodies are not returned to their families for burial, nor is the location of the burial site disclosed.

Belarus is the only country in Europe and Central Asia which continues to implement the death penalty.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. The death penalty violates the right to life, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Please write immediately in Belarusian, Russian or your own language:

- Urging the Prosecutor General to withdraw the death penalty as a sentencing option for Ihar Hershankou and Siamion Berazhnoy, and all others on death row;
- Stress that whilst we are not seeking to downplay the seriousness of the crime, research shows that the death penalty does not have a unique deterrent effect and is the ultimate denial of human rights;
- Calling on the President to introduce an immediate moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 SEPTEMBER 2017 TO:

President

Alyaksandr Lukashenka
Vul. Karla Marksa 38
220016 Minsk, Belarus
Fax: +375 17 226 06 10
+375 17 222 38 72
Email: contact@president.gov.by
Salutation: Dear President

Prosecutor General

Alyaksandr Kaniuk
Vul. Internatsionalnaya 22
220050 Minsk, Belarus
Fax: +375 17 226 42 52 (Say 'fax' clearly
if voice answer)
Email: info@prokuratura.gov.by
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And copies to:

Human Rights Centre Vyasna
Vul. Merzhinkovo, 8-26
220012, Minsk, Belarus,
Email: viasna@spring96.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Between 2009 and 2015, Ihar Hershankou, Siamion Berazhnoy, and two other people were found guilty of murder, kidnapping, embezzlement, drug possession and falsification of documents with the aim of appropriating real estate property. Their two co-defendants in the case were sentenced to 22 and 24 years in prison respectively.

Despite continuing assurances from the Belarusian authorities that it is progressing towards establishing a moratorium on the death penalty, Belarus continues to show a flagrant disdain for the global and regional trends towards abolition. In April, Siarhei Vostrykau (who was convicted and sentenced to death in May 2016) was the first person to be executed in Belarus in 2017. Now, along with Ihar Hershankou and Siamion Berazhnoy, there are two other prisoners currently on death row in Belarus who were convicted and sentenced to death in 2016 and 2017, respectively: [Kirył Kazachok](#) and [Aliaksei Mikhalenya](#). Kirył Kazachok chose not to appeal his conviction and sentence and the Supreme Court rejected Aliaksei Mikhalenya's appeal on 30 June. Both men are at risk of imminent execution.

Death sentences are often imposed in Belarus after unfair trials which include use of forced "confessions" as evidence to convict; they are implemented in strict secrecy and without giving adequate notice to the condemned prisoners themselves, their families or legal representatives. The authorities refuse to return the bodies of those executed to their relatives or even disclose where they are buried. Executions have been carried out in breach of requests from the UN Human Rights Committee to the government for stays, pending the Committee's consideration of the petitions to review the cases. In November 2012, the Human Rights Committee found that the application of the death penalty in Belarus violates the human rights of those condemned and their families.

By failing to publish full information about the use of the death penalty, including comprehensive statistics about the number of death sentences imposed and executions carried out, the Belarusian authorities prevent informed public debate about the issue and hamper the movement towards abolition.

Amnesty International believes that the death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, and a violation of the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amnesty International supports calls, included in five resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly since 2007, for the establishment of a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty. As of today, 105 countries have fully abolished the death penalty in law and 141 are abolitionist in law or practice.

Name: Ihar Hershankou and Siamion Berazhnoy

Gender m/f: m

UA: 195/17 Index: EUR 49/6930/2017 Issue Date: 14 August 2017