

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 40/98

Death Penalty / Fear of imminent execution

8 June 1998

BELARUS Igor Lyashkevich, aged 30 (_____)

Igor Lyashkevich, who has a wife and young son, was sentenced to death almost a year ago for allegedly being amongst a group of men who murdered a policeman.

Given the time that has elapsed since he was sentenced, Amnesty International fears that Igor Lyashkevich is at risk of imminent execution.

The family of Igor Lyashkevich, who has always maintained his innocence, and over 50 people from his home village have appealed to the President to grant him clemency. However, as information regarding the death penalty is classified as a state secret in Belarus, it is unlikely that the existence or progress of any appeal on his behalf would be made public.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and without reservation, on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to information broadcast on 11 April 1998 on Belorussian national television, at least 55 prisoners are currently on death row in the country.

At least 13 of these received their sentences in 1998. On 22 January 1998 President Lukashenka stated that 30 executions had been carried out in 1997 and that he had only pardoned one person facing the death penalty since he came to power in 1994.

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

- urging the President of Belarus to grant clemency to Igor Lyashkevich and all others currently under sentence of death in Belarus, and to commute their sentences;
- expressing unconditional opposition to the death penalty as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- expressing deep sympathy with the victims of violent crime and their families but pointing out that the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments and is brutalizing to all involved in its application.

APPEALS TO: (Please note that fax tones can be difficult to obtain, particularly out of office hours when they 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

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ul. Karla Marksa, 38, Administratsia Prezidenta Respubliki Belarus

Otdel po voprosam pomilovaniya i grazhdanstva

Zaveduyushchemu otdelom

Samusevu V.

BELARUS

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Salutation: Dear Mr Samusev

COPIES TO:

The Chairman of the Supreme Court of Belarus, Valentin Sukalo

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BELARUS

The Procurator General of Belarus, Aleh BOZHELKO

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BELARUS

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Ivan ANTONOVICH

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BELARUS

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and to diplomatic representatives of Belarus accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.