

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Penalty

7 August 1992

REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA:

Male, name unknown

Amnesty International is concerned that a prisoner currently being held in Lukiskis prison in Vilnius, the capital of the Republic of Lithuania, may soon be executed. The organization does not know the prisoner's name. The source of this information is an article in the Baltic Independent (dated 31 July - 6 August 1992). According to the article, the man was convicted of the murder of a young girl while in a drunken stupor. He has been on death row for the past seven months and is currently awaiting a response to his petition for clemency. The article continues: "If the death sentence is not overturned, he faces execution within a week of the final decision. As the laws of Lithuania are in flux at the moment, no one is quite sure of the means of execution. Most likely, according to prison officials, it will be done as before: during a transfer, or while taking a walk, he will be gunned down by surprise". Amnesty International is not in a position to corroborate the information contained in the article.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Information on the application of the death penalty has been given to Amnesty International by the authorities of the Republic of Lithuania. According to this information, the death penalty is currently retained for one crime only - premeditated murder under aggravating circumstances.

Five death sentences have been passed since restoration of independence in March 1990. In four cases the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. It is believed that the fifth case may be the one referred to in this action.

The submission of a petition for clemency is the final stage of the judicial process for capital offences in the Republic of Lithuania. Clemency may be granted by the Presidium of the Supreme Council (comprising the Chairman of the Supreme Council, Deputy Chairmen, the Secretary and other members who are elected by the Supreme Council) on the recommendation of the Clemency Commission of the Supreme Council.

A working committee charged with drafting a new criminal code has recently finished its work. It is unclear what its conclusions are on the death penalty.

However, Amnesty International has been informed by the Lithuanian authorities that the draft of a new constitution is expected to be approved this month by the Supreme Council and later submitted to a referendum, and that this draft "does not provide for capital punishment".

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- appealing for commutation of the death sentence passed on the man in question;
- explaining Amnesty International's opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances without exception;
- urging the authorities in the Republic of Lithuania to consider the complete abolition of the death penalty.

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APPEALS TO:

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

Vytautas Landsbergis

Chairman of the Supreme Council

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Republic of Lithuania

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Salutation: Dear Chairman

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

Chairman of the Clemency Commission

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Gedimino pr. 53

2026 Vilnius

Republic of Lithuania

Telegrams: Chairman Clemency Commission, Vilnius, Lithuania

Salutation: Dear Chairman

3. Procurator General of the Republic of Lithuania

Arturas Paulauskas

Procurator General

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Republic of Lithuania

Telegrams: Procurator General, Vilnius, Lithuania

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Salutation: Dear Procurator General

4. Minister of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania

Vytautas Pakalniskis

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Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

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Algirdas Saudargas

Minister of Foreign Affairs

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Republic of Lithuania

and to diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Lithuania accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 September 1992.