

URGENT ACTION

First death sentence in 2016

Gennadii Yakovitskii (m) was sentenced to death in Belarus on 5 January. His was the first death sentence to be passed in 2016.

On 5 January, the Minsk Regional Court found **Gennadii Yakovitskii** (49 years old) guilty of the brutal murder of his partner, on 29 June 2015. She was 35 years old. Gennadii Yakovitskii was sentenced to death in 1989 following a conviction for murder in a separate case when Belarus was still part of the former Soviet Union. His death sentence was later commuted to a 15 year prison term.

In this latest case, Gennadii Yakovitskii reportedly killed his partner in the flat which they shared, following two days of drinking with friends. As witnesses, those same friends gave contradictory testimonies although all of them alleged that Gennadii Yakovitskii hit his partner with his fists many times, during an argument.

An appeal against the conviction and death sentence was lodged by Gennadii Yakovitskii with the Supreme Court on 20 January. If the conviction is upheld, and if he does not receive a presidential pardon, he could be executed within months.

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

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. It 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, English or your own language:

- √ Urging President Lukashenka to halt any planned executions and immediately commute the death sentence handed down to Gennadii Yakovitskii and all others sentenced to death in Belarus;
- √ Calling on him to establish an immediate moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty;
- √ Stress that whilst we are not seeking to downplay the seriousness of the crime of which Gennadii Yakovitskii has been convicted of, research shows that the death penalty does not deter crime more than other forms of imprisonment and is the ultimate denial of human rights.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 MARCH 2016 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 Lukashenka

And copies to:

Prosecutor General

Alyaksandr Kaniuk

Vul. Internatsionalnaya 22

220050 Minsk, Belarus

Fax: +375 17 226 42 52 (Say "fax" clearly if voice answers)

Email: info@prokuratura.gov.by

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

HIS EXCELLENCY MR SERGEI ALEINIK Embassy of the Republic of Belarus, 6 Kensington Court W8 5DL, 020 7937 3288, Fax 020 7361 0005, uk.london@mfa.gov.by, www.uk.mfa.gov.by

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

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Additional Information

In 2014 Belarus secretly executed Pavel Selyun who had been sentenced to death in 2013 for a double murder committed in 2012. Later in the year, the Mogilev Regional Court confirmed that Rygor Yuzepchuk had been executed. The authorities did not make public the date of his execution.

On 20 November 2015, the Hrodna Regional Court, in western Belarus, sentenced Ivan Kulesh to death for murder. In response to this latest sentence, the EU reiterated its call on Belarus to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards abolition.

Death sentences are often imposed in Belarus after unfair trials which include forced confessions; 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 tell them where they are buried. Executions are carried out despite requests from the UN Human Rights Committee to the government not to do so until the Committee has considered 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.

As of today, 140 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Three more countries—Fiji, Madagascar and Suriname- became abolitionist for all crimes in 2015.

Name: Gennadii Yakovitskii

Gender m/f: m

UA: 18/16 Index: EUR 49/3294/2016 Issue Date: 25 January 2016