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Belarus: undisclosed execution comes to light

Amnesty International strongly condemns the execution of Belarusian death row prisoner, Kiryl Kazachok, in October 2017. News of his execution has only recently been disclosed by the family and brings the total number of known executions in Belarus in 2017 to two.

Kiryl Kazachok's execution comes despite the Belarusian authorities' increasingly positive rhetoric regarding abolition of the death penalty. It has been denounced by the Council of Europe and the European Union. Belarus cannot continue to ignore the regional and global momentum towards abolition, and maintain its isolated stance as the sole executioner in the whole of Europe and the Former Soviet Union. Six men remain on death row in Belarus and are at imminent risk of execution.

In Belarus, death sentences are implemented in strict secrecy and without giving adequate notice to the prisoners, their families or their legal representatives. Condemned prisoners are given no warning that they are about to be executed; instead they are taken out of their cells, told that their appeal for clemency has been turned down, and then forced to their knees and shot in the back of the head. Their families are only informed days, or sometimes weeks, later that their relative has been executed. In accordance with the Criminal Executive Code the bodies of those executed are not returned to their families and the location of the burial site is not disclosed. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus has stated that: "The way the death penalty is carried out in Belarus amounts to inhuman treatment."

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. The organisation reiterates its call for Belarus to introduce an immediate moratorium on death sentences with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

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