

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## Belarus executes third prisoner this year

Amnesty International strongly condemns the reported execution of death row prisoner Alyaksandr Haryunou; this is the third execution in Belarus in 2014.

It only became known on 4 November that Alyaksandr Haryunou's appeal for clemency had been denied on 13 October and also on 4 November his mother received a parcel containing the clothes he wore while on death row. According to local anti-death penalty activists, this is something that happens only after someone has been executed. On 5 November, Alyaksandr Haryunou's lawyer was informed by the local court that he had 'departed according to his sentence'. Alyaksandr Haryunou's family and lawyer expect to receive official confirmation within the next few days. They were not informed of the date of the execution or given the opportunity for a final meeting with him, in violation of internationally recognized standards on the application of the death penalty.

Alyaksandr Haryunou was sentenced to death by a court in the city of Homel on 14 June 2013 for the murder of a female student and acquaintance in September 2012. On 22 October 2013, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus overturned the death sentence passed by the Homel Regional Court against Alyaksandr Haryunou and returned the case for reconsideration to the court of first instance, but on 24 December 2013 the regional court again sentenced him to death.

Alyaksandr Haryunou's case was pending with the UN Human Rights Committee, the body overseeing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Belarus is a state party. The Committee had requested that the sentence not be carried out until it had considered the case, but, as in previous instances, the Belarusian authorities carried out the execution regardless.

At least one other man remains on death row in Belarus and there are concerns he is at imminent risk of execution. Eduard Lykau was sentenced to death on 26 November 2013 for five murders committed in 2002, 2004 and 2011. His appeal was turned down by the Supreme Court on 15 April 2014.

Following a period of twenty-four months in which no executions took place, Belarus has executed three prisoners so far in 2014. In doing so, Belarus remains the last executioner in the whole of Europe and Central Asia and has ignored not just its legal human rights obligations but also the clear regional and global trend towards abolition of the death penalty. Amnesty International reiterates its call for Belarus to introduce an immediate moratorium on the death penalty and commute all existing death sentences.

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 after their relative has been executed. The Criminal Executive Code allows the authorities to refuse to return the bodies of those executed to their families or to even inform them of the location of the burial site. In October 2013, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus stated: "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.

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