

URGENT ACTION

TWO MORE PRISONERS EXECUTED IN BELARUS

Belarusian prisoners, Ihar Hershankou and Siamion Berazhnoy have been executed, likely on 19 or 20 November. Amnesty International condemns their execution and continues to call on the Belarusian authorities to introduce an immediate moratorium on all executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Last week, the families of **Siamion Berazhnoy** and **Ihar Hershankou** confirmed to the Belarusian civil society organisation Human Rights Centre *Viasna* that they had been officially informed of the executions. Also, according to information from *Viasna*, the men were likely executed on 19 or 20 November.

The co-defendants were sentenced to death on 21 July 2017 following their conviction for the murder of six people. The Supreme Court upheld the sentences in December 2017. Both cases had been communicated to the Belarusian government by the UN Human Rights Committee which requested that the executions be put on hold while it conducted a review. As has happened in numerous previous cases, the Belarusian authorities went ahead with the execution of both men, in violation of their obligations under international human rights law.

Earlier in the year, two other death row inmates are believed to have been executed. During his Supreme Court hearing in May, death row prisoner Viachaslau Sukharko declared that on the night of 15-16 May, Aliaksei Mikhalenya and Viktor Liotau had been taken away from their cells and never returned. In June, when Amnesty International asked Belarusian officials to confirm the fate of the two men, the organisation was told "we know as much as you do." The Belarusian authorities have yet to publicly confirm the executions, revealing a continuing lack of transparency around the issue.

On the one hand, the Belarusian authorities are cooperating with the international community around abolition while simultaneously continuing to execute men in secrecy. The bodies are not returned to the families for burial and the burial site is not disclosed, which creates immeasurable distress for families.

Belarus remains the sole country in Europe and the former Soviet Union to carry out executions. The latest cases have been widely condemned by the international community including the European Union and the Council of Europe. The Belarusian authorities must exercise political leadership by introducing an immediate moratorium on executions as the critical next step towards abolition.

Thank you to all those who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.

This is the second update of UA 195/17. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur49/7712/2018/en/

Further information on UA: 195/17 Index: EUR 49/9540/2018 Issue Date: 7 December 2018

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