

URGENT ACTION

BELARUS MUST NOT EXECUTE VIKTAR SERHIL

Viktar Serhil is at imminent risk of execution in Belarus after his conviction and death sentence were upheld by the Supreme Court on 31 January. Viktar Serhil can now appeal to President Lukashenka for clemency, but it is extremely unlikely that it will be granted. Soon after clemency is refused, Viktar Serhil may be executed.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

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Chairperson of the Clemency Commission
Presidential Administration
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Dear Ms Chupris,

I am addressing you in your capacity as the Chairperson of the Clemency Commission and am writing to urge you to take all necessary steps to facilitate the granting of clemency to **Viktar Serhil**, after the Supreme Court upheld his conviction and death sentence on 31 January 2020.

On 25 October 2019, Brest Regional Court found Viktar Serhil guilty of murdering an eight-month-old girl and sentenced him to death. His co-defendant and mother of the child, Natalia Kolb, was sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment, as women cannot be sentenced to death in Belarus. Viktar Serhil is now at imminent risk of execution following the Supreme Court decision.

Viktar Serhil was convicted of a terrible crime, but no state should resort to the death penalty, regardless of the crime committed. The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and has no place in any criminal justice system today. Belarus is the only country in Europe and the former Soviet Union, which still carries out executions.

I urge you to:

- Take all necessary steps in your capacity as the Chairperson of the Clemency Commission to ensure that Viktar Serhil is granted immediate clemency, and that his execution and that of all those on death row in Belarus is halted;
- Use your leverage to seek an introduction of a moratorium on all executions in Belarus as a first step towards full abolition of the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Despite continuing pressure on the Belarusian authorities from within Belarus and from the international community, Belarus continues to impose death sentences and execute prisoners in secrecy. In 2019, Belarus sentenced three men to death and executed at least three men.

Belarus remains the only country in Europe and the former Soviet Union that is still executing prisoners. President Lukashenka recently reiterated his support for retaining the death penalty in Belarus.

Nonetheless, sustained pressure from Belarusian civil society and the international community does appear to be having an impact. The Parliamentary Working Group on the Death Penalty in the Belarusian Parliament was recently renamed the Parliamentary Working Group on Studying Abolition of the Death Penalty, which is a positive and explicit expression of the authorities' intention to move towards abolition.

In Belarus, death sentences are often imposed after unfair trials; they are implemented in strict secrecy and without giving adequate notice to the 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. The secrecy surrounding executions in Belarus has been identified by the UN as amounting to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of the relatives.

Furthermore, Belarus has repeatedly carried out executions, despite requests from the UN Human Rights Committee to the government not to do so until the Committee has considered the cases. Since 2010, this has happened in 13 cases.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian, Belarusian.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 1 April 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: **Viktar Serhil** (he/him)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS: Ambassador Sergei Aleinik, Embassy of Belarus, 6 Kensington Ct, Kensington, London W8 5DL