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**HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS
AGAINST
THE DEATH PENALTY
10 YEARS OF FIGHT**



2009—2019

10 years of campaigning

for the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus

Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty

10 years of fight

Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty. 10 years of fight

Coordinator: **Andrei Paluda**

Editor: **Palina Stsepanenka**

Foreword: **Ales Bialiatski**

Design and layout: **Viktar Korzun**

Idea and compilation: **Andrei Paluda, Palina Stsepanenka**

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THE DEATH PENALTY
10 YEARS OF FIGHT**

**2009–2019
10 years of campaigning
for the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus**

Minsk
2019

We count the years **by executions**

When we launched the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” ten years ago, our skeptical colleagues with many years of experience in human rights protection in Belarus incredulously nodded: “So, who and what is it you are going to tell about?” Indeed, this invisible tragedy of the everyday life of the country and the people was a challenge for us. A moral challenge, as you cannot be silent when in a jail right in the center of Minsk, like in the central square in the Middle Ages, people are systematically deprived of their lives. And a practical challenge, too, since all the information about the death penalty in Belarus was hidden from the public.

But, surprisingly, the daily hard work to investigate the mysteries of the death penalty almost immediately began to give result. Gunsmoke started to take the shape of somewhat blurred, and then more and more defined, contours of real people. Those sentenced to death, their names, their monstrous stories, their letters written by

hand, their mothers, and wives, and children. And boundless fear and despair in their letters, in the eyes of their mothers, who until the last moments of their sons’ lives (women are not executed in Belarus), and often after the execution, **believe** that their children are alive!

We saw a more detailed procedure of sending people to death and burying them in an unknown place with numbered plates on top. There was a man, and suddenly he’s not there, and one can only believe in his death a priori. The proof is a piece of paper with a stamp brought by the letter carrier. One of the mothers recently received a parcel from Akciabrski (Rudabielka), a town in the Belarusian Paliessie. And she was immediately revived, called us and said, “So he’s in the mines in Pietrykaŭ! There’s a new mine there! They secretly exiled him there, and we just don’t know!” With this thought, she will live for years...

There is no justification for a crime, and none of us dares to justify criminals. Moreover, there

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ЗАБОЙСТВА – ГЭТА НЕ ПРАВАСУДДЗЕ

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is no justification for murder committed by the hands of the government.

We see public opinion gradually changing. More and more people sympathetically respond to our appeal: "Thou shalt not kill!" But every year we have to overcome our own disappointment and own defeat, for guns are still smoking in the dungeons of the Valadarka prison. And no mufflers or prison walls can hide the echo of those shots from us.

In a public campaign like ours, it is impossible to achieve partial results. We either win or we lose, and there is no third option. We count every

past year by executions. And we start each new year with hope, stubbornly repeating to ourselves the words of **Václav Havel**:

"Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out."

Ales Bialiatski,
human rights defender

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Belarus is the only country in Europe and in the former Soviet Union to still use the death penalty.

Men aged 18 to 65 can be sentenced to death in Belarus.

Andrei Paluda, coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus,” says: *“When death convicts arrive at death row, the*

prison staff treat them as if they are no longer alive. Their lawyers are often denied visits, mail is censored or banned so as not to allow the families to know whether their relatives are still alive.”

Executions take place in the center of Minsk, in the remand center (SIZO) in Volodarsky Street.

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In 1998, the Human Rights Center “Viasna”, which was then called “Spring 96”, was contacted by the mother of death convict **Ivan Famin**. The human rights defenders received from her several letters that Famin had written while on death row and managed to pass through the “prison mail.”

The death row prisoner argued that he was convicted of the brutal murder of a taxi driver, which he did not actually commit. He also described in some detail the conditions of detention on death row:

“This is pure hell... They beat me for anything... For writing statements to the prison hospital and for requesting a priest for confession. And they beat just for fun, too, if they are not in the mood.”

Ivan Famin’s mother said that her son was forced to confess, after criminals threatened to otherwise kill his mother and sister.

In 1998, activists sent a complaint in Famin’s case to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. The Committee began its consideration and notified the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the matter would be considered at the international level. According to para. 92 of the Committee’s Rules of Procedure, the government should not enforce the death sentence while the convict’s complaint is being considered on the merits. Despite this, Ivan Famin was executed.

The story was continued in 2012, when activists of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus” travelled to Berlin to interview **Aleh Alkayeu** (warden at remand prison number 1 in 1996-2001) for the documentary “Departed under Sentence”. The activists brought with them Famin’s letters that he had written on death row in 1998.

Aleh Alkayeu, who at that time also led the firing squad, said that he remembered Famin. He also confirmed that Ivan Famin was executed for a murder committed by other people, and everyone knew that he took over someone else’s guilt and incriminated himself during the investigation and trial. Despite all that, Famin was executed. Alkayeu stressed that the firing squad’s job is enforcing the court ruling, and the executioner cannot decide who will live and who will die, as decisions are made at a different level.

1 Letters sent by Ivan Famin to the Human Rights Center “Viasna” in 1998 from death row in Volodarsky Street in Minsk.

2–3 Minsk, remand prison number 1, death row cell. The prison uniform has letters “ИМН” (“an exceptional measure of punishment”). 2006. In one of the photos, a death row prisoner wearing a striped uniform is forced to change into clothes with the letters “ИМН” for a story filmed by the public television channel.

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В Комитет по правам человека
"Минская весна - 96"
от осужденного Романа Ивана
Васильевича к расстрелу
в данный момент содержащегося
в Сизо-1 г. Минск

Заявление.

Уважаемые члены Комитета Минская весна-96! Трону Вас защитить мое право на жизнь. В процессе следствия я был принужден для освобождения т.к. на меня было оказано психологическое давление со стороны тех называемых моих, подельников "Шаткина А.И. и Жарова С.В.". Шаткин Александр и его брат Владимир угрожали мне и моим родным расправой если я не возьму на себя эти убийства, но это еще не все. Когда я пришел в Октябрьский РОВД то, я сказал начальнику розыска, что я не виноват. Меня заперли в камеру. Через 20-30 минут за мной приехали с Минского сельского РОВД и при всех начали бить называя меня убийцей. Избивать продолжали меня и во время перевода в а/к "микроостановка 343" до самого Минского сельского РОВД и при избивании, милиционеры говорили мне те жесткости для которых мне не сказали Шаткин и Жаров. Три взятия явки с поданной мной были два сотрудника И.В.С. по рукам и ногам резиновой дудилкой. Мне не оставалось выбора, т.к. следователь по РОВД мне сказал если ты будешь молчать и говорить какой-то бред, чтобы не убивали, то я - следователь сделаю тебя козлом но ты всеравно откажешься то, что мне надо. Также следователь сказал, если ты Роман напишешь явку с поданной то тебя больше не будут бить. И я боясь, его меня чекают, согласился. Когда меня за-



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In September 1982, in a forest near Orša, construction workers discovered a pit containing bodies of 50 executed people. A commission found that those were executions of the Soviet period. Here is the unique document: *“On September 20, 1982, the Commission consisting of representatives of the Soviet and administrative authorities (public prosecutor, forensic expert, a representative of the military commissariat and the police) conducted a review of the remains found during the construction of the railway line Orša-North.*

After interviewing local residents and exhumation, the Commission rules out the possibility that these people were executed during the German occupation:

“Usually, the Germans carried out executions openly, rather than in remote places, using machine guns and without damaging the bones of the head (...) The spot inspection revealed that the burials were made in 1937-1939 in a remote wooded area (...) All the fifty skulls have bullet holes in the forehead.”

The act of 1982 on the terrible discovery of the remains of 50 people who were executed near Orša during Stalin's regime.

А К Т

20 сентября 1932 года

г.Орша.

Комиссия представителей советских и административных органов в составе: ответственного секретаря Оршанского районного отделения Белорусского общества охраны памятников истории и культуры ПИЩАЛОВА I прокурора тов.АНДРЕЙКОВА Г.Н., врача судебно-врачебной экспертизы тов.ЛОСЕВА В.А., старшего лейтенанта Оршанского военкомата тов.РИЗОВА ТОВА В.Д., старшего лейтенанта милиции тов.ЛУЧИНА Н.С. сего числа произвели осмотр останков захороненных людей, обнаруженных при строительстве подземной железнодорожной ветки к заводу МЭИ межколхозстрой через лесной массив южнее деревни Андреевщина.

Осмотром на месте обнаруженных местными жителями останков захороненных людей установлено, что захоронение произведено примерно в 1937-1939 г.г. в глухом лесном массиве в братской могиле пятьдесят человек. Время захоронения подтверждается тем, что хорошо сохранившаяся обувь, состоящая из хромовых сапог с калошами, много поношенных туфель с калошами и другой модельной обувью, имела хорошо сохранившиеся фабричные штампы Московской фабрики "Красный треугольник" и Ленинградской фабрики резиновых изделий с хорошо видимым годом изготовления - 1936 - 1937 год (белый треугольный штамп). Все пятьдесят человеческих черепов имеют пулевое отверстие в лобной части и хорошо сохранились.

Опросив старожилов дер.Андреевщина и близлежащих деревень с целью выяснения возможности расстрела советских людей немецко-фашистскими захватчиками в период Великой Отечественной войны 1941-1945 г.г. было установлено, что расстрелов в период оккупации Белоруссии немцы в этих местах не производили. Как правило, расстрелы немцы производили открыто, а не в глухих местах, из автоматов без повреждения костей головы. Все жители подтверждают, что расстрелы советских людей производились в 1937-1939 г.г. органами НКВД. В этот период лес, так называемый "Кобыляцкой горы" был местом массовых расстрелов ни в чем не повинных советских людей, так же, как лесной массив по Могилевскому шоссе у д.р.Поддубцы.

Комиссия считает, что захоронение произведено в 1937-1940 г.г. репрессированных советских людей. Остатки следует захоронить на месте

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их обнаружения. Для этой цели и этой могилы выделить людей директ- завода МЭИ Облмежколхозстрой тов.Саквевскому И.М.

КОМИССИИ: Пичуров Г.Х.
Андрейкова Г.Н.
Лосев В.А.
Ризатов В.Д.
Лучин Н.С.



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9 2 E X E C U T I O N S

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In 2009, the Human Rights Center “Viasna” and the Belarusian Helsinki Committee initiated the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”, which was launched in January with the support of Amnesty International. Throughout the year, the activists provided legal assistance to persons sentenced to death and arranged a wide information campaign (to the extent possible considering monopolization of media space in Belarus), organized press conferences, debates, competitions of creative works, street actions.

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- 1** Logo of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” by Viktor Korzun.
 - 2** First campaign coordinator - Iryna Toustsik of the Human Rights Center “Viasna”.
 - 3–4** Activists of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” gather signatures to petition against the death penalty. Minsk.

Н забірай жыццё!

Праваабаронцы супраць смяротнага пакарання ў Беларусі

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The campaign activists prepared a petition urging the authorities to abolish the death penalty in Belarus. On December 10, the petition was handed over to the Presidential Administration and the House of Representatives of the National Assembly.

The first person to sign the petition against the death penalty was Mechyslau Hryb, lawyer, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus of the 12th convocation (1994-1996), Chairman of the Human Rights Commission. It was under Hryb's tenure that the first Constitution of independent Belarus was adopted on March 15, 1994.

1 Mechyslau Hryb, lawyer, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus of the 12th convocation (1994-1996), Chairman of the Human Rights Commission: *"When the issue of the death penalty is being discussed, I recall this particular example. On February 29, 1980, Tsiarenia was sentenced to death for allegedly murdering a woman in September 1979. In reality, she was killed by Mikhasevich. Tsiarenia was executed on June 20, 1980. Another defendant in the trial spent more than 6 years in prison and was released in August 1986, after the arrest of Mikhasevich. Eleven more persons were soon released. All of them had been wrongfully convicted of murdering the women that were actually killed by Mikhasevich. The men served 5 to 10 years in the Soviet camps, which ruined their lives. Tsiarenia was acquitted posthumously. It was a miscarriage of justice that could not be remedied."*

2 Krzysztof Zanussi, film director: *"Pope John Paul II spoke out very strongly that there is no justification in today's world for the death penalty, although there used to be justifications before. And, of course, from a human point of view, I am very much against it. It seems to me as something quite impossible."*

3 Kasia Kamotskaya, singer: *"No one has the right to take a human life. In a country with no independent courts, there are unjust sentences and errors. And they can punish innocent people. The death penalty is a sign of great backwardness of the country."*

4 Zhanna Litvina, journalist, in 1995-2015 chairperson of the Belarusian Association of Journalists, winner of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Human Rights Award 2018: *"I believe that civilized societies should exclude the death penalty in order to avoid punishment of innocent people. In general, the death penalty can also be seen or perceived as a kind of sacrifice. I believe that a life sentence is for the criminal a greater punishment from God than execution."*

5 Lavon Volski, musician: *"We will not change anything, if we kill a person who has committed even a very, very terrible crime. Believe me, it will not change anything, except that it will produce fresh bloodlust. The death penalty may be only supported by people who are pursuing some political goals, or by people who are bloodthirsty by their nature or simply bad people."*

6 Uladzimir Puhach, musician: *"I believe that one day people will stop killing each other. And what I would really like to see is people not killing each other according to the law. I mean the death penalty."*





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- 1 Pavel Sapelka**, lawyer: *“Murder is murder, whatever it is called by the state or the society. Let it be called the death penalty, or the supreme measure of social justice, or ten years without the right of correspondence — murder is murder.”*
- 2 Svetlana Alexiyevich**, writer, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature: *“For 30 years, I have been writing my “red chronicle”, as I call my series of books. I write a lot about war. I was in Afghanistan and I saw people being killed and human lives being taken... And I have always wondered: how can people live with the thought that they can kill another person and do the work of God? Since none of us has any right to it. This is an old and obsolete solution to human problems: kill another person, because he does not agree with you, because he does not like you, or he has done something terrible. I think our world will remain the place where people kill their own kind. Of course, I join those who want to bring a different time, when other persons will not even think, like today we are not thinking of eating another person, as cannibalism disappeared from human life, so they will not even think of killing another man.”*
- 3 Uladzimir Arlou**, writer: *“If a person is sentenced to death, he loses any opportunity, in case he is innocent, to see justice. Many of us in Belarus remember the Viciebsk case. Many innocent people were convicted, one person was sent to death. Many of the defendants in the case had been in prison for years before the real killer was found. My friend’s brother returned from prison a sick and broken person, both physically and mentally. He died one year after his release. The presence of the death penalty leads to the fact that the lives of innocent people are often taken.”*
- 4 Ales Marachkin**, artist: *“The death penalty should be completely abolished. And I will explain why: we have enough power structures — the prosecutor’s office, special forces, the police, who are guarding these people. And what the most terrible criminals should get is a life sentence, life imprisonment. So that we do not violate God’s commandment: “Thou shalt not kill!”*
- 5 Zmitser Vaitiushkevich**, singer: *“I support the appeal to the Belarusian authorities, because I think that time has come to figure out who we are, where evil comes from, and who has the right to judge and which means to use. Things are complicated and things are simple. Really, I do not want innocent people to be killed, because sometimes it happens.”*
- 6 Adam Hlobus**, writer: *“When our government or any other government sentences a person to death, and destroys the person, in addition to just one killer, the society receives a couple of new ones. It is the prosecutor who asked for a death sentence. It is the judge who handed down the death sentence. And it is the executioner, who committed the murder. So, we kill someone, we get three murderers. We multiply killers, and this is intolerable.”*
- 7 Tamara Lisitskaya**, journalist, writer and screenwriter: *“People should not kill people. Full stop! And I would really like to see this law passed everywhere. Both on earth and in heaven. And if it does not seem convincing, is another popular phrase: “Only God decides, only God judges”. And everyone will suffer the punishment that they must incur. And it is not for us to decide.”*





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- 1 **Zinaida Bandarenka**, People's Artist of Belarus: *"I believe that Christian Belarus should not have the death penalty. With God's grace, a person should live. And if he has committed a brutal crime, then in the next world he will definitely be punished."*
- 2 **Katsiaryna Pytleva**, singer: *"The death penalty is actually revenge. I believe that the person who has committed a crime will better realize what he's done if he lives his life to the end, knowing that he will never leave the cell and not be able to do nothing but sit and think and remember what he did."*
- 3 **Aleh Hulak**, human rights activist, chairperson of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee: *"Belarus should abolish the death penalty because it is savagery to let the state kill a man in the 21st century. This is a mockery of the people, this is a mockery of the law, a mockery of our epoch. I believe that the government should first of all declare a moratorium on executions and then to erase the death penalty from the Penal Code. It will be very important for the humanization of the Belarusian society."*
- 4 **Mikhail Pastukhou**, lawyer, judge of the Constitutional Court in 1994-1997: *"The history of civilization, the history of society go to show that we are gradually moving towards progress, rejecting such terrible, hideous punishments that we used to have before, including those related executions: quartering, beheading, hanging. Although shooting is considered a "humane" and "civilized" punishment, the result remains the same: the state kills its people, although the worst of them, even for the most heinous crimes. Belarus should abandon the death penalty and join the European family of peoples who have abolished this barbaric form of punishment."*
- 5 **Andrei Khadanovich**, poet: *"The death penalty has always attempted to keep a man within boundaries through a feeling of fear. The death penalty a possibility of error, and death is something that cannot be corrected. We are not the ones who can decide whether a person deserves to live or not."*
- 6 **Hary Pahanyaila**, human rights defender: *"The right to life is a natural right. It is granted by the Lord, and no one can take away a person's life. Therefore, I oppose our laws viewing the death penalty as punishment for criminal offenses. You cannot put the state in conditions when it should commit murder itself."*
- 7 **Hanna Khitryk**, singer: *"I do not know what could make me say that I am for someone to cease to exist, any living person at all. And I do not understand people who say, "Yes, this person should be removed, destroyed, roughly speaking, killed." Because, if you are for the death penalty, then you are for the war. I understand that the man condemned to disappear did a lot of bad things. But revenge is as bad."*



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On June 5, 2009, activists were arrested during a performance in central Minsk, allegedly for “participation in a protest.”

Activists were arrested during a performance in central Minsk, allegedly for “participation in a protest.” Minsk, June 5, 2009.



On November 10, at a press conference in Minsk, the mother of Andrei Zhuk, who was sentenced to death in 2009, addressed the President.

Sviatlana Zhuk asked Aliaksandr Lukashenka to pardon her son. The press conference involved **Valiantsin Stefanovich**, an activist of the Human Rights Center “Viasna”, and **Heather McGill** of Amnesty International, who said: *“The secrecy that surrounds the death penalty in Belarus is, in fact, equated to torture against the families. Because the man sentenced to death does not know when he will be executed, and his family will never know anything, even the date. This is a very difficult test for people. It is hard for the prisoners who are there waiting every minute: when the door is open — they will be taken out to death. It is terrifying to the families who do not know anything. They cannot say goodbye to their loved one, will not receive his body and even his things, they will not know where he is buried.”*

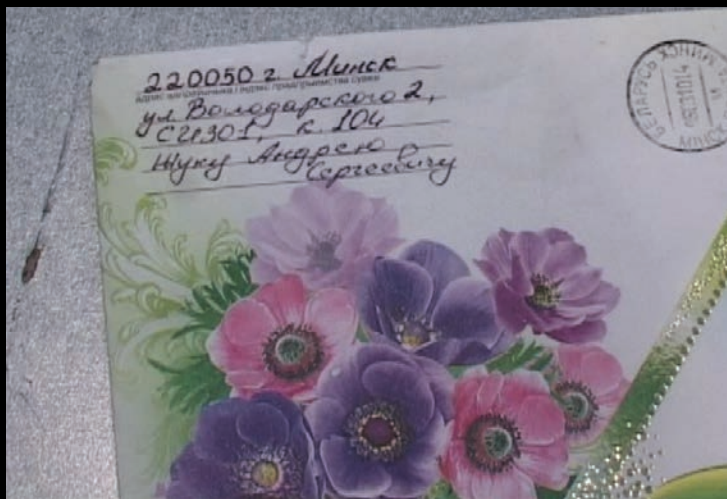
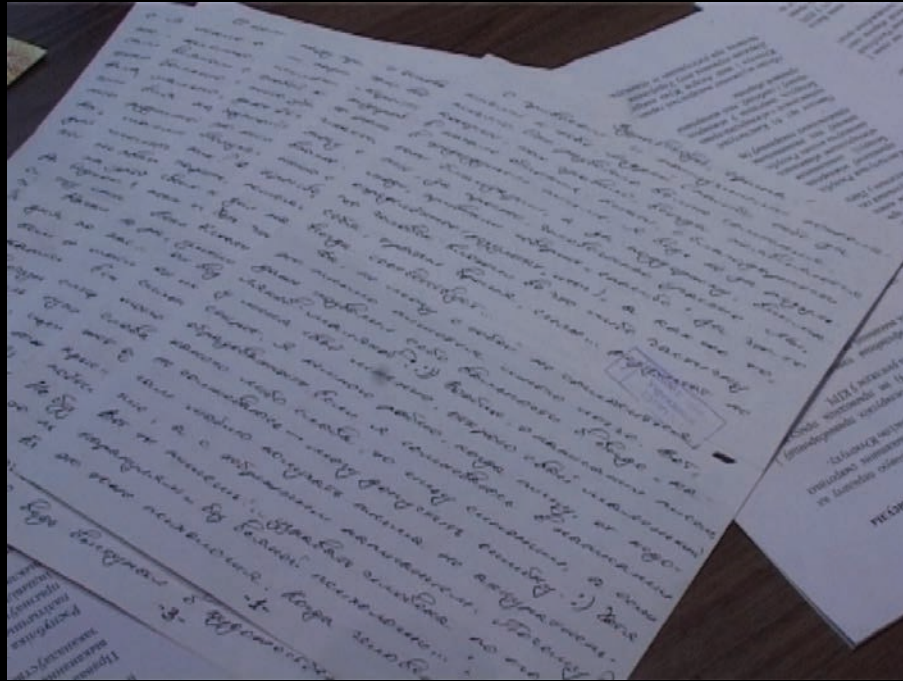
Press conference with the participation of the parents of death convict Andrei Zhuk and human rights activists from the Human Rights Center “Viasna” and Amnesty International. 2009.



Human rights activist Iryna Toustsik communicated with death row prisoner Andrei Zhuk. *“It was a short correspondence, which ceased after a quick execution,”* Iryna recalls. *“In his letters, Andrei Zhuk talked about the boundaries of justice in the death penalty. He cited examples when one person received 25 years in prison, while another one was sentenced to life, and yet another one was executed for committing similar crimes.”*

From a letter by Andrei Zhuk: *“Making his point in favor of retaining the death penalty, the Minister of Justice said that, when considering this question, we may ask the relatives of the victims. Emotion, revenge — it is not justice. In this case, we don’t need any courts. Let the relatives have weapons and do the lynching...”*

Human rights activist Iryna Toustsik communicated with death row prisoner Andrei Zhuk.



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2 EXECUTIONS

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The bodies of executed prisoners are not returned to the families; the place of burial is not disclosed.

Andrei Zhuk and Vasil Yuzepchuk were executed on March 18, 2010. On March 23, an urgent press conference was arranged in Minsk.

Sviatlana Zhuk, the mother of Andrei Zhuk, said: *“After the meeting on March 4, I asked when I could bring my next parcel. They said, ‘On March 19.’ So I brought the parcel, and applied for it, as usual. And they said, ‘Wait, they’ve been taken away somewhere.’ Then some manager on duty appeared and said: ‘In fact, you should not look for him anywhere else, wait for the notification.’ We visited cemeteries around Minsk, looking for fresh graves. Yesterday, we went to the warden and he said: ‘We sent him to the place of judgment. Go to court, where the sentence was passed.’”*

On June 1, the registry office in Salihorsk finally issued a death certificate. The document mentioned the date of death — March 18, 2010; and the “cause of death” box had a dash. The death was confirmed on March 21.

The woman had to work hard to receive confirmation that her son was no longer alive. *“The sentence was executed, but they do not find it necessary to notify the parents,”* Sviatlana Zhuk said. *“After the warden confirmed that the sentence was executed, we did a memorial meeting. We made a grave in the village, where we could come to remember our son. We buried Andrei’s*

things there, so that the grave was somehow associated with him.”

On October 4, 2010, Sviatlana Zhuk appealed to the Lieninski District Court of Minsk against the Department of Corrections’ refusal to disclose her son’s place of burial. The Department referred to Art. 175 of the Criminal Code, according to which “the body is not given for burial; the place of burial is not disclosed.”

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- 1** Andrei Zhuk’s death certificate. Shuk was executed on March 18, 2010. The “cause of death” box has a dash. It was this document that gave the name for a human rights documentary “Cause of Death — Dash.”
 - 2** Mother of executed prisoner Vasil Yuzepchuk, a still from the documentary “Cause of Death — Dash.”
 - 3** Human rights activist Iryna Toustsik and Andrei Zhuk’s mother looking for the graves of unidentified persons in the Northern Cemetery of Minsk. According to one version, the executed were buried here. This is more like a legend. But the families keep looking for the bodies here. During the filming of “Cause of Death — Dash.”

Гражданин(ка) ЖУК
фамилия,
АНДРЕЙ СЕРГЕЕВИЧ
собственное имя, отчество
 умер(ла) 18.03.2010
число, месяц, год, цифрами и прописью
восемнадцатого марта две тысячи десятого года
 в возрасте 26 лет, о чем в книге регистрации актов о смерти
21 числа апреля месяца 2010 года
 произведена запись за № 313
 Причина смерти _____
 Место смерти: республика (государство) **Беларусь**

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The trial of the participants of a picket against the death penalty. **Ales Bialiatski, Iryna Toustsik** and **Valiantsin Stefanovich**. March 2010

Ales Bialiatski, Iryna Toustsik and Valiantsin Stefanovich.
March 2010



[RFE/RL]



[RFE/RL]

October 10 —
World Day against
the Death Penalty.

-
- 1** October 10 — World Day against the Death Penalty. Ales Bialiatski, Zmitser Sauka, Ilona Urbanovich-Sauka
 - 2** October 10 — World Day against the Death Penalty. Iryna Toustsik and Ales Bialiatski during the picket. Minsk, 2010
 - 3** Logo of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” by Uladzimir Tsesler



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In October 2010, the world-famous musician **Sting** supported the efforts of human rights activists in the struggle for the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus. Sting gave a concert in Minsk during the Symphonicity world tour, met with human rights activists, and signed the petition for the abolition of the death penalty. *“It’s time to change,”* he said in a video message.

“Hi! My name is Sting and I’m against the death penalty in all cases, because I believe in human dignity. In Europe, just one country carries out the death penalty. And that country is Belarus. It’s time to change. Let your voice be heard, sign the petition against the death penalty in Belarus, and let’s put a stop to this cruelty — for good. Thank you.”

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- 1 Sting
 - 2 Aleh Hulak, Sting, and Valiantsin Stefanovich — against the death penalty. Minsk, October 2010
 - 3 The petition against the death penalty in Belarus



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забірай жыццё!
Праваабаронцы супраць смяротнага пакарання ў Беларусі

Petition against the Death Penalty

Belarus is the last country in Europe and former Soviet Union that is still carrying out the death penalty. Amnesty International, Human Rights Centre "Viasna", Belarusian Helsinki Committee and other human rights defenders in Belarus oppose the death penalty in all cases without exception. The death penalty is a violation of the right to life, guaranteed by the Constitution of Belarus and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nothing can justify the purposeful and ruthless taking of a human life by State.

The death penalty is a destructive and divisive public policy that has been shown to have no special deterrent effect on crime. It distracts from effective measures being taken against criminality through promoting simplistic responses to complex human problems. It denies the possibility of rehabilitation and reconciliation. It prolongs the suffering of the murder victim's family, and extends that suffering to the relatives of the condemned prisoner. Amnesty International, Human Rights Centre "Viasna", Belarusian Helsinki Committee does not seek to belittle the suffering of the families of murder victims, and recognizes and endorses a government's duty to protect the rights of all people under its jurisdiction. However, executions are a symptom of a culture of violence rather than a solution to it. By executing a person the state commits a premeditated killing and shows a similar readiness to use physical violence as the criminal.

In Belarus the use of the death penalty is compounded by a flawed criminal justice system that administers capital punishment in a manner that violates international laws and standards pertaining to the death penalty. There is credible evidence that torture and ill-treatment are used to extract "confessions"; condemned prisoners may not have access to effective appeal mechanisms; and the inherently cruel, inhuman and degrading nature of the death penalty is compounded for death row prisoners and their relatives by the secrecy surrounding the death penalty. Neither prisoners nor their families are told the execution date in advance and prisoners must live with the fear that every time their cell door opens they may be taken for execution.

We call on the President and Parliament of Belarus to immediately declare a moratorium on death sentences and executions as a first step towards full abolition of the death penalty.

18/9/10

Date



Signature

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In October 2010, priest **Aliaksandr Nadsan**, Apostolic Visitator for Belarusian Catholics, met with human rights activists to sign the petition for the abolition of the death penalty.

Aliaksandr Nadsan said: "I am a priest and a Christian. To me, life is a gift of God, that must be well-used, to the glory of God, for the sake of others on Earth. Life can only be given by God and it is God who takes our life here, on Earth, in due time. No one else can do it. This is my principle. Taking a more practical look at everyday life, it is essential to me that capital punishment is not a punishment. The essence of the punishment is for a person to suffer for what he has committed, but he should be given a chance to repent and save his life. In case his life is taken, he cannot repent. One should never abandon a hope that the toughest criminal with a heart of stone, provided he lives a long life, if he has but one day left, may repent. Remember what the Lord said: "God has no pleasure in their death (i.e. sinners), but that they should repent and live." This is what matters most to me. It is part of my faith."

Priest Aliaksandr Nadsan signs a petition against the death penalty. October 2010



On October 10, 2010, musicians from Belarus and Lithuania played together on the same stage at a charity concert in Vilnius to call on people to say “No” to the death penalty in Belarus.

Lithuanian performers **Zala & Driukas** are frequent guests at the concerts of the Belarusian-Lithuanian solidarity. Zala (Andrius Zalieska) said that they played for free, because good ideas should be supported: “I myself am against killing.”

Zala & Driukas performed together with the Belarusian band **RAHIS** in one of the clubs in the center of Vilnius. Before the concert, activists handed out leaflets with information about the death penalty in Belarus.

Zala & Driukas performed together with the Belarusian band RAHIS in one of the clubs in the center of Vilnius.



On November 30, activists of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” held an action in Minsk called “Cities for Life — Cities against the Death Penalty.” Dozens of candles were lit in the evening at the walls of the Red Church (Church of Saints Simon and Helena).

Dozens of candles were lit in the evening outside the walls of the Red Church.

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2 E X E C U T I O N S

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In 2011, activists of the campaign **“Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”** prepared an information leaflet with the statements of Belarusian writers, artists and human rights activists against the death penalty.

Information leaflet with the statements of Belarusian writers, artists and human rights activists against the death penalty.



Алес Бяляцкі
старшыня Праваабарончага центру "Вясна", член-заснадац Міжнароднай федэрацыі права абароны чалавека (FIDH).

— Тое, што ў Беларусі да гэтага часу прыводзяць да выканання смертнай прысуды — гэта абуральна. І вельмі выразна сведчыць аб жорсткасці беларускай прававой сістэмы, уключаючы ў себе суды, пракуратуру і месцы ўтрымання вязняў. Мне здаецца, што Беларусь працягвае чапляцца за савецкае мінулае, дзе смертнае пакаранне выкарыстоўвалася вельмі часта. Дзякуючы таму, што беларускі праваабаронца пакалі камізію супраць смертнага пакарання ў Беларусі, сама праблема стала больш рэальнай, персаніфікаванай: мы бачылі канкрэтных людзей, якія стаяць за ёй — асуджаных да вышэйшай меры пакарання і расстраляных, іх сваякоў. Праблема стала больш зразумелай для грамадства, і ролі дзяржавы ў гэтай сітуацыі стала вядомай чытай-грашай. Дзяржава з суровага баронцы спакою і парадку пераўтварыцца ў помслага ката і пісталетам у руках.

Далучым Беларусь да свету, вольнага ад смертнага пакарання!

Петыцыя:
"Мы, грамадзяне Рэспублікі Беларусь, лічым, што жыццё з'яўляецца найвышэйшай каштоўнасцю, натуральным і неад'емным правам чалавека. Мы цвёрда перакананыя: нішто не можа апраўдаць найменшае і бяспрытнае пазабуйнае чалавека жыццё ад імя дзяржавы.

Смертнае пакаранне мае незвычайны характар. Пазабуйнае жыццё не выраіцца здэйсненага злочынам і не адноіцца справядлівасці. Акрамя таго, нельга выключыць судовых памылак. У выпадку смертнага пакарання выраіцца судовае памылку і вярнуць жыццё чалавеку немагчыма.

Навунісць смертнага пакарання не з'яўляецца дадатковай абаронай грамадскасці, паколькі не стрымлівае людзей шляхам застрашэння ад здзяйснення злочынацтва. У навуковых даследаваннях адсутнічаюць пераканальныя доказы таго, што смертнае пакаранне — больш эфектыўны сродак зніжэння злочынацтва, чым іншыя віды пакарання.

Не імкнучыся прызначыць пакуты ахвяры і іх родных, мы звяртаем увагу на тое, што працэдура выканання смертнага пакарання, якая існуе ў Беларусі — гэта бесчалавечнае абходжанне са сваякамі асуджаных да смерці і іх пааб'яўлення спадчынай імячымасці, развітацца са сваімі блізкімі, ім не выдаюцца іх целы для пахавання, а месца пахавання трымаюцца ў таемніцы.

Смертнае пакаранне супярэчыць прынцыпам гуманізму, маралі і агульначалавечым каштоўнасцям, прычынам усіх рэлігій, якія выкажваюцца ў Беларусі."

Беларусь — адзіная краіна ў Еўропе, дзе да гэтага часу выносіцца і прыводзяцца ў выкананне смертнае прысуды. Пасля адмены смертнага пакарання Украінам з 1 студзеня 2008 года наша краіна засталася апошняй з дзяржаваў на постсавецкай прасторы, якая прымяняе дадзены від пакарання.

Святлана Алексіевіч
беларуская пісьменніца, лаўрэат Нацыянальнай прэміі крытычнай думкі.

— Смертнае пакаранне — гэта старое, далगतное вырашэнне чалавечых праблемаў, забіць іншага, таму што ён з табой не згодны, таму што ён не табе, як ты, або ён здзейсніў штосьці страшнае. Я думаю, што наш свет такі і застаецца светам людзей, якія забіваюць да сябе падобных. Я, вядома, далучаюся да тых, хто хоча наблізіць іншы час, калі ў іншага чалавека нават не ўзнікне думкі, як сёння ў час не ўзнікне думкі з гэтай іншага чалавека, так як подобарства знікла з чалавечага жыцця, такі не ўзнікне думкі забіць іншага чалавека.

Скажы:
"НЕ – СМЯРОТНАМУ.. ПАКАРАННЮ"



Кампанія
"Праваабаронцы супраць смертнага пакарання ў Беларусі"

www.belhelcom.org www.spring96.org



Злата Бандарэнка
дэпутатка Палаты прадстаўнікоў Нацыянальнага сходу Рэспублікі Беларусь.

— Я ўвесь час думаю пра тое, што гэтае пакаранне не мае нічога агульнага з гуманізмам і праваабаронай чалавека. Гэтае пакаранне — гэта пераважна палітычны інструмент, які выкажваюцца ў Беларусі ў адносінах да інавацыйнага мыслення і свабоднага выказвання думак. Гэтае пакаранне — гэта пераважна палітычны інструмент, які выкажваюцца ў Беларусі ў адносінах да інавацыйнага мыслення і свабоднага выказвання думак.

Мета акампаніі — аднаго смертнага пакарання ў дзяржаве Беларусі да атрымання вольнага коштасця суду.



У Менскай дзяржаўнай праваабарончай і праваабарончай арганізацыі "Вясна" у сакавіку 2014 года прайшла перадавая кампанія супраць смертнага пакарання ў Беларусі ў рамках нацыянальнай "Кампаніі супраць смертнага пакарання ў Беларусі". Кампанія супраць смертнага пакарання ў Беларусі ў рамках нацыянальнай "Кампаніі супраць смертнага пакарання ў Беларусі".



Леан Бяляцкі
дэпутат Палаты прадстаўнікоў Нацыянальнага сходу Рэспублікі Беларусь.

— Смертнае пакаранне ў Беларусі — гэта пераважна палітычны інструмент, які выкажваюцца ў Беларусі ў адносінах да інавацыйнага мыслення і свабоднага выказвання думак.

Алег Гур'ян
дэпутат Палаты прадстаўнікоў Нацыянальнага сходу Рэспублікі Беларусь.

— Я ўвесь час думаю пра тое, што гэтае пакаранне не мае нічога агульнага з гуманізмам і праваабаронай чалавека. Гэтае пакаранне — гэта пераважна палітычны інструмент, які выкажваюцца ў Беларусі ў адносінах да інавацыйнага мыслення і свабоднага выказвання думак.

On July 29, the Y Gallery in Minsk hosted a presentation of the documentary **“Cause of Death — Dash”**, which was created in the framework of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”.

The film draws attention to the suffering of relatives of people sentenced to death. Human rights activist Valiantsin Stefanovich says that the Belarusian legislation does not allow families to collect the bodies of executed prisoners. Nor is the place of burial disclosed. Moreover, the death certificate has a dash in the box “Cause of Death”. The main character of the film is the mother of Andrei Zhuk, who was executed in March 2010.

Mechyslau Hryb noted that in the first years of the independence of Belarus about 30 death sentences were each year, but in recent years, the number has decreased to 2-3 executions a year.

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- 1** Presentation of the documentary “Cause of Death — Dash”. In the first row, Sviatlana Zhuk, mother of executed convict Andrei Zhuk
 - 2** Presentation of the documentary “Cause of Death — Dash”. Human rights activists Valiantsin Stefanovich and Aleh Hulak
 - 3** Valery Filipau, Doctor of Physics and Mathematics, one of the first human rights activists to address the issue of abolishing the death penalty in Belarus, and Andrei Paluda, coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”.
 - 4** Mechyslau Hryb, lawyer, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus of the 12th convocation (1994-1996), and Andrei Paluda, coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”.



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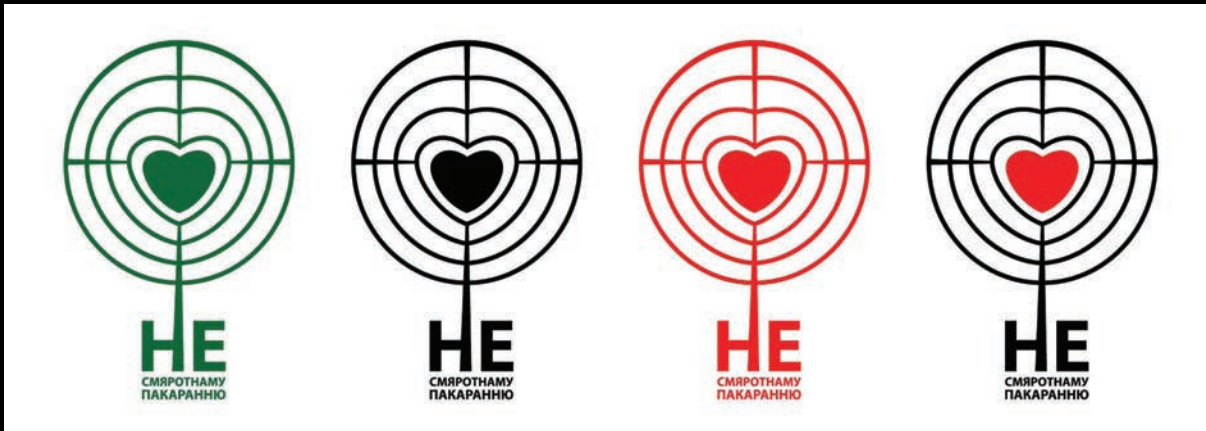
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On September 29, 2011, the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” awarded designer and photographer **Sofya Andreyuk** as the winner of a contest of campaign logos. The campaign also awarded a student of design **Katsiaryna Petava** and a graphic designer from Hrodna, **Dzmitry Hupianets**.

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- 1 Logo by Sofya Andreyuk
 - 2 Logo by Dzmitry Hupianets
 - 3 Logo by Katsiaryna Petava



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October 10,
World Day against the Death Penalty.
Minsk, 2011

October 10, World Day against the Death Penalty.
Minsk, 2011



On November 28, 2011, Belarusian human rights defenders issued a statement:

*Belarusian human rights defenders strongly condemn the state prosecutor's request to sentence to death **Dzmitry Kanavalau** and **Uladzislau Kavaliou**, defendants in the 11 April 2011 subway bombing trial.*

The Belarusian Constitution and the international treaties ratified by the country guarantee the citizens' natural and inalienable right to life, proclaiming it as the supreme value.

The death penalty is meaningless.

It does not correct the committed, nor does it restore justice.

It does not result in the criminal's repentance or conscience of guilt.

It does not stop other criminals, but exacerbates the society.

Sincerely sympathizing with the grief and sufferings of the victims of the crimes and their families, we however should state that the death penalty procedures applied in Belarus with the convicts' bodies not returned for burial, and the time and location of burial, as well as the time of the execution, remaining a secret, are inhuman treatment towards the families of executed convicts. Therefore,

we should put an end to the escalation of violence and sufferings.

The death penalty, as revenge and a rudiment of medieval atrocity, is intolerable from the viewpoint of morals even when it is used against persons whose guilt of committing grave offences has been completely proven and raises no grounded doubts.

Meanwhile, it is evident that no law enforcement system or judiciary is perfect. Moreover, miscarriages of justice cannot be corrected after the application of the death penalty.

One cannot ignore the fact that, according to reports by defense lawyers, human rights defenders, certain victims and ordinary citizens, the investigation into the Minsk metro explosion, as well as the entire trial of Dzmitry Kanavalau and Uladzislau Kavaliou, failed to be professional and convincing.





Observers report serious procedural violations during the preliminary investigation and the judicial examination. The defendants' right to legal protection has been gravely restricted. The defendants' reports of physical and psychological pressure during the preliminary investigation failed to be properly examined. Numerous motions by the defense lawyers, aimed at clearing up the irregularities and contradictions of the presented evidence, were groundlessly dismissed.

During the trial, a number of victims expressed their doubt as to Dzmitry Kanavalau and Uladzislau Kavaliou's involvement in the terrorist act. Tens of thousands of Belarusians have signed the petition requesting not to execute the defendants in the case.

We believe that, provided that the investigation has established Dzmitry Kanavalau and Uladzislau Kavaliou's direct involvement in the metro explosion, the lives of the persons possessing valuable information on the circumstances of the tragedy should be saved for the sake of public security.

Dzmitry Kanavalau and Uladzislau Kavaliou's lives should be saved because future data on the 11 April terrorist act may appear. It is not the execution of the criminals that should be viewed as the crucial aftermath of the case, but the society's confidence in the establishment of every motive, circumstance and persons involved.

For the sake of humanity and public security, we demand not to apply the death penalty against Dzmitry Kanavalau and Uladzislau Kavaliou!

Aleh Hulak, Belarusian Helsinki Committee;

Alena Tankachova, Volha Smalianka, Legal Transformation Center;

Tatsiana Reviaka, Belarusian Human Rights House;

Enira Branitskaya, Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities;

Andrei Paluda, campaign "Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty";

Valiantsin Stefanovich, HRC "Viasna".





On November 30, 2011, the Supreme Court of Belarus announced its judgement in the case of Dzmitry Kanavalau and Uladzislau Kavaliou. It was pronounced by the first deputy chairman of the Supreme Court Aliaksandr Fedartsou. Kanavalau and Kavaliou were found guilty of involvement in the April 2011 explosion at the Kastychnickaja metro station and an explosion in July 2008 in Minsk. Meanwhile, almost 50 thousand people on the Internet were in favor of sparing the defendants' lives. Long before the start of the trial, dozens of reporters, human rights activists and witnesses involved in the hearings gathered outside the House of Justice in Minsk. Mobile communications were jammed in and around the courtroom. Journalists with photo and video cameras were not allowed inside. The 114-page long verdict was read out in full at the request of the victims. It took 4.5 hours. The Court found that Kanavalau carried out the attack on April 11, 2011 in Minsk, having assembled an explosive device in Viciebsk. Kavaliou, assisted by Kanavalau, brought the explosive to a rented apartment and helped Kanavalau to activate the device. Kanavalau was found guilty of bringing the device to the metro and setting it off. The judge called the names of all the 15 people killed in the attack and about 200 wounded. Kanavalau was also found guilty of carrying out an explosion on Republic Day, July 4, 2008 in Minsk. Uladzislau Kavaliou was found guilty of misprision. The court found Kavaliou guilty of complicity in the terrorist attack on April 11. On November 30, 2011, the Supreme Court sentenced Kanavalau and Kavaliou to death, saying that they "represent an exceptional danger to society."

Kanavalau was found guilty of malicious hooliganism and intentional destruction of property, illegal acquisition, storage, transportation of explosives, terrorism, combined with homicide. Kavaliou was found guilty of malicious hooliganism and intentional destruction of property, illegal acquisition, storage, transportation of explosives, failure to report a grave crime, as well as aiding terrorism.

On December 1, 2011, **Liubou Kavaliouva**, Uladzislau Kavaliou's mother, wrote to President Lukashenka asking him to pardon her son.

On December 15, the UN Human Rights Committee registered an individual communication regarding the violation of the right to life and the right to a fair trial, which was submitted by Uladzislau Kavaliou's mother Liubou Kavaliouva. The case was registered under number 2120/2011. The UN urged the government not to carry out the death sentence while the complaint was under consideration at the Committee.



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2 E X E C U T I O N S

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March 15, 2012 — the official date of the execution of Uladzislau Kavaliou and Dzmitry Kanavalau

On March 14, the state-owned TV channels said that Aliaksandr Lukashenka denied pardon to Uladzislau Kavaliou and Dzmitry Kanavalau. A notification of execution issued by the Supreme Court was dated March 16.

Uladzislau Kavaliou's mother, **Liubou Kavaliova**, said that this violated her son's rights, as he had not time to file a supervisory appeal. He only managed to write a request for reprieve to prepare the appeal. Similarly, the authorities did not wait for Kavaliou's complaint to be considered by the UN Human Rights Committee, although it had asked the Belarusian government not to execute the convict during the examination of his complaint.

"But as early as March 13 and 14, for some reason, they did not let in his lawyer Stanislau Abrazei. They never filed a supervisory appeal, since they were not allowed to meet," says Liubou Kavaliova.

The mother last saw her son during a meeting on March 11. On March 16, he was reportedly executed. Liubou Kavaliova and her daughter Tatsiana doubt the death certificate specified the actual date.

"An employee of the registry office invited me into her office. There was a computer and she found the date

there. It was March 15. She said they were going to receive more information about the execution. So they put the date in the certificate. And we do not know if it's true or not," says Liubou Kavaliova.

The family in Viciebsk received the prisoner's clothes and even food, which he did not have time to eat. But the notes that Uladzislau Kavaliou made during the trial were not there.

He kept the records in a yellow folder. Those who attended the hearings remember Uladzislau holding the folder as he was brought in the courtroom.

"He asked us to keep the folder, in his letters and during my last visit. But all I received from the KGB detention center were his things, foodstuffs, letters and photographs, but not all of them. Uladzislau's records disappeared in the KGB detention center," says the prisoner's mother.



Uladzislau Kavaliou, executed on March 15, 2012

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She does not know exactly what Uladzislau was writing at the trial. But she remembers that the guards were constantly looking over his shoulder to see what he was writing... Now Liubou Kavaliova finds many important and meaningful things in the behavior of her son and his guards:

“On March 11, when we arrived to see Uladzislau, we were treated extremely politely. But the visit was unexpected: the day before I got a call and they asked me to come. By the time, Tatsiana, my daughter, had not even had time to write an application for a meeting, but they allowed it. I asked to postpone the meeting for at least a day, because I feared there would be no tickets to Minsk. But I was told that the meeting was scheduled for the 11th, not earlier or later... And on March 13, Uladzislau’s lawyer was not allowed to see him. He may have been dead by then... The way he looked into my eyes the last time I saw him! It was as if he wanted to say something! And there were tears in his eyes. And then prison officers told me something like “Take his

things, there’s no room for them in here...” Back then, I did not understand what they were saying.”

The things were sent by mail. On March 22, Liubou Kavaliova received a package weighing more than 26 kilograms. Her son’s large bag had everything: clothes, medicines, sanitary supplies, blank envelopes, postcards that he never mailed. The yellow folder was among the things. It was empty. And there were a lot of foodstuffs — butter, coffee, tea and cookies.



In April 2012, for the filming of the documentary “Departed under Sentence”, activists of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”, assisted by the German branch of Amnesty International, travelled to Berlin to interview **Aleh Alkayeu**, former warden of remand prison number 1 in Minsk, the author of the book “Firing Squad”. Alkayeu supervised the execution of about 150 death row prisoners. We met with him in a mall in the Russian district of Berlin, in a store selling kitchen furniture. This is the place where the former warden worked after he in 2001 disclosed the secret of using the execution gun in the extrajudicial executions of government opponents and had to leave Minsk.

Aleh Alkayeu on a ban on giving out bodies to the families: *“The places of burial, the place of the execution and the names of the executioners are a secret. These are the three things I have never told and will never tell anyone. It is really a secret. Why should I excite the public and set other officers up. It is impossible. Our newspapers have written all the rest about me. They wrote that I am the head of the group and that I shot many people. However, there is a mistake...I shot a few more. At the time of my interrogation on November 22-23 I called the number 134, but in several days there were more shootings, that’s why the total number is about 150. I don’t remember for sure now, but I remember that we continued working. Who needs the place of the burial? People will come with shovels to dig, and what will they find there? It is indecent and*

inhuman. I don’t see much sense in honoring the memory of the executed, they committed terrible crimes. There is no heroism in it. And the laws are adopted by the Parliament. If they adopt a law according to which the bodies are to be issued to the relatives, they will be issued. I explain it to myself with the inertia of thinking and the legacy of the Soviet Union. When there were reprisals and extrajudicial killings, people were tried by “troikas”. The heads of these bodies took decisions at their sole discretion, that’s why there could be no talk of issuing the bodies, as anybody could provoke a riot and any burial could turn into a non-peaceful demonstration. The situation was too hot, and this inertia has lasted until now. There is a certain paradox in this situation: if a death row convict is killed in the cell or commits a suicide before the execution, his body will be issued. There was a case in Minsk where two inmates ↓

During the filming of the documentary “Departed under Sentence”, Berlin, April 2012. “Departed under Sentence” is what the families of executed prisoners hear in modern Belarus. This is a standard phrase, which reports that the man was executed, and nobody, not even the warden, has the right to utter the word “execution”. The documentary focuses on the problem of executioners who enforce the sentence on behalf of the state. Aleh Alkayeu, former warden of jail number 1 in Minsk, the author of the book “Firing Squad”, the man who was personally involved in the executions, tells about the feelings and emotions of executioners. The movie was made as part of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus”. Director — Viktor Tratsiakou, script — Palina Stsepanenka.



hung themselves on one rope in turn. I received some accusations that I failed to keep them alive until the execution. There were also such cases in my practice in Kazakhstan. A prisoner asked me, and I explained that if he was shot his body wouldn't be issued, but if he died on his own, the body would be issued. He hung himself the following day and wrote me, "Thanks for the advice!" One can understand it in two ways. Probably, he sincerely thanked me."

Aleh Alkayeu on executioners: "Everyone passes this barrier. Later I asked the staff who attended the executions. All of them felt that stressful situation almost identically. This is a very unusual phenomenon, the emotional state during the first time is the same for everyone, and it's a delayed perception of time. I spoke with the staff about it. Time slows down to the point that you can see clearly how the gun works, as in slow motion. I ask others, and they felt the same during their first time. And then everything is okay, and the gun too, employees who were on the squad were not allowed anywhere near it during their first time, they all watched from a distance. Reactions are unpredictable. You may lose consciousness, who knows what you are like. No one knows a man's psyche. We looked at his state, and this was often far from a pleasant sight. The next time he came closer. A murder is always a murder, even if it is sanctioned by the law. There is nothing romantic about it, nothing to boast of. There is no heroism, and this is not a place where one can receive a medal. I have never romanticized or heroized this profession. When it all

becomes a part of the working routine and one's duties, one gets accustomed to it. No one forces a man to do it. He is just offered and he estimates whether he can do it, judging by his abilities. And it happens that somebody can do it, he may experience some stress, but not so much as to lose consciousness. As a rule, these people even drank very little. They didn't swamp their grief in alcohol, and instead had a stable psyche. That's why I didn't see any problems. And then, the degree of guilt, do you think that the person who pulls the trigger feels guiltier than the others? This guilt is shared by everyone: the one who holds the prisoner, and the other who pulls the trigger. That's why there was no particular difference between those who held and those who shot."

During the filming of the documentary "Departed under Sentence", Berlin, April 2012. The movie was made as part of the campaign "Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus". Director — Viktor Tratsiakou, script — Palina Stsepanenka.



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Paintings by **Viktar Tratsiakou**
for the documentary
“Departed under Sentence”

Paintings by Viktar Tratsiakou for the documentary
“Departed under Sentence”



2 0 1 2
O(?) EXECUTIONS

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A group of volunteers working with the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” created a series of animated movies called “**The Flight**”, “**The Queue**” and “**The Executioner**”.

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- 1** Still from the animated movie “The Flight”
 - 2** Still from the animated movie “The Queue”.
 - 3** Still from the animated movie “The Executioner”.



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Human rights defenders put forward a number of arguments against the death penalty, which was followed by the filming of a series of mini documentaries under the title “Six Arguments against the Death Penalty”.

The arguments are as follows:

Argument 1. Miscarriage of justice, the irreversibility of the death penalty

Argument 2. Executioners, professional killers who take lives in the name of the state

Argument 3. Religious — “Thou shalt not kill!”

Argument 4. Murder of political opponents, mass repression

Argument 5. Suffering of the families — ban on giving out the body, failure to report the execution date

Argument 6. Inefficiency in deterring crime

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- 1** Painting by Viktor Tratsiakou for the movie “Six Arguments against the Death Penalty”
 - 2** Filming of the documentary “Six Arguments against the Death Penalty”
 - 3** Eugenijus Peikštenis, director of the Lithuanian Genocide Victims Museum in Vilnius, in the cell where the executions took place, near the window through which the bodies were dragged into a van, tells of executions in the USSR. The Museum contributed to the filming of documentaries on the death penalty as part of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”.
 - 4–5** Places of Stalin time mass executions in Orša. Stills from the movie “Six Arguments against the Death Penalty”



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Activists of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus” take part in the 5th World Congress against the Death Penalty, which took place in Madrid on June 12-15. The Congress was organized by the Association “Together against the Death Penalty” (**Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort (ECPM)**) with the support of the governments of Spain, Norway and Switzerland.

On June 15, the participants of the World Congress organized a march through the streets of Madrid. Human rights activists from Belarus took part in this rally. The procession began and ended near the building of the Callao City Lights Theater, which housed the official closing ceremony of the Congress. Half a century ago, the building housed a screening of the movie “The Executioner” (El Verdugo, 1963) by the Spanish director and screenwriter Luis García Berlanga.

On June 14, 2013, activities of the congress included a round table discussion “Europe: A Strategy for the Future”. The event was attended by human rights activist **Valiantsin Stefanovich**.

“I would highlight two aspects with respect to public opinion in Belarus,” said Mr. Stefanovich. “In 2011, 15 people died as a result of a terrorist attack in the Minsk subway. This was the first such case in Minsk, and Belarusian society was shocked, because such crimes had never been conducted in our country

before that. It would seem that public opinion was to shift towards the death penalty. However, in this very case, many people started opposing the death penalty, as they did not trust the investigation and the sentence that was imposed in respect of two young people who were accused of committing the terrorist act. Now we can observe a situation in which people speak in favor of the death penalty except for in the “case of terrorists”, which was “unfair”. The public outcry was so great after the delivery of the verdict to Kavalious and Kanavalau in 2011, that the two major religious confessions, Orthodox and Catholic, publicly stated their position on the death penalty for the first time. When referring to the referendum of 1996, the authorities forget that the question concerning the death penalty was non-binding and had the so-called consultative status. Secondly, at the time of the referendum there was no life imprisonment in Belarus – only the death penalty or 15 years of imprisonment. This is a very important factor, too. Public opinion is not static and is subject



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- 1 During the Congress in Madrid
 - 2 Human rights defenders Tamara Chikunova and Andrei Paluda during the Congress in Madrid
 - 3–4 Activists of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” attending the Congress in Madrid



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to changes. Nevertheless, there is no dialogue on the death penalty in society – this topic is not discussed. Public organizations can work in this direction, but their capacity is very limited, and they are not allowed to speak on state television. We can only disseminate information on the Internet and organize street events, which may not always be without consequences for the organizers.”

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- 1 Procession during the Congress in Madrid
 - 2 Valiantsin Stefanovich speaking at the event
“Europe: A Strategy for the Future”



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On October 5, Bialystok hosted a concert “The Last Dawn”, dedicated to the topic of the death penalty in Belarus. Thanks to an online broadcast, it could be viewed by thousands of Belarusians.

The recording the project took place in the Bialystok Philharmonic Hall. Each of the artists presented two songs at the concert. The tracks were specifically devoted to the topic of the death penalty. **Lavon Volski** sang about the crucifixion, **Aliaksandr Pamidorau** — the execution of prisoners in gas chambers, **Hanna Khitryk** chose the theme of the guillotine, **Ales Dzianisau** covered the topic of shooting, **Nasta Shpakouskaya** wrote a song about the electric chair, **Viktar Rudenka** sang about poisoning, and **Zmitser Vaitsiushkevich** about the gallows.

On October 10, 2013, on the World Day against the Death Penalty, activists presented the studio version of the musical project “The Last Dawn” on the Internet.

“The Last Dawn” continued the traditions of such musical projects as “Narodnya Albom” (“The People’s album”) “Ya Naradziuskia Tut” (“I Was Born Here”) and “Sviaty Vechar” (“Holy Night”). However, unlike its predecessors, it was created in real time and in addition to music includes a rich visual part, which was prepared by artist **Nasta Shastak** and director **Pavel Bandzich**. The initiator of the project is the **Human Rights Center “Viasna”**.

“This is a project of artists from different musical styles and different views, who are united by one topic, which confirms its social importance,” notes the coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”, **Andrei Paluda**. *“We were very worried, because for us it was the first creative project of such scale, but the final product and the media confirm its success. I am very grateful to the creative team of the project and to all the participants for their contribution to our common cause.”*

The project involved the creative team of the Tuzin.fm portal.

1–2 Rehearsal of The Last Dawn concert, Bialystok

3–4 The Last Dawn concert, Bialystok



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2 0 1 3
4 E X E C U T I O N S

2 0 1 4

On October 29, mother of death row prisoner **Aliaksandr Hrunou** received by mail his personal belongings and clothes. This was reported by the human rights activist **Leanid Sudalenka**: *“Volha Hrunova phoned and said that she received several parcels. She opened them and saw the shoes, and the clothes of her son. There was no official paper about the execution, but considering that the pardon was rejected, Lukashenka’s statement and the fact that the things were mailed, there is no doubt that the death sentence has been enforced against Aliaksandr Hrunou.”*

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- 1** Death row prisoner Aliaksandr Hrunou
 - 2** Volha Hrunova with her son’s prison uniform
 - 3** The Criminal Code, which rights activist Leanid Sudalenka sent to death row for Aliaksandr Hrunou. The text has marks made by the prisoner
 - 4** Human rights activist Leanid Sudalenka
 - 5** Palina Stsepanenka and Andrei Paluda with the prisoner’s clothes, which they received from his mother Volha Hrunova



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13. Под общеопасным способом понимается способ совершения преступления, характеризующийся большой разрушительной силой или иным образом создающий опасность гибели людей, причинения телесных повреждений, иных тяжких последствий (взрыв, поджог, затопление и др.).

14. Под термином «заведомо» понимается признак, указывающий, что лицо, совершающее преступление, известно юридически значимые обстоятельства, предусмотренные настоящим Кодексом.

15. Под систематичностью понимается признак, указывающий на совершение лицом более двух тождественных или однородных правонарушений.

Комментарий

1. Определения терминов в статье 4 имеют нормативный характер и подлежат строгому толкованию. При этом необходимо учитывать, что предлагаемая в статье трактовка терминов относится исключительно к уголовному закону.

2. Устанавливая круг лиц, относящихся к близким родственникам...

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On April 18, the mother of death row prisoner **Pavel Sialiu** learned from his lawyer that the sentence had been carried out. The lawyer came to the meeting with her client, but she was told that Sialiu had “departed under sentence”, which meant that the convict had been executed.

No written documents or messages have been sent to Pavel Sialiu’s relatives. His mother was not notified of the decision by the commission for pardon or the date of execution. In the coming days, she was going to visit her son in prison.

Human rights activist **Uladzimir Khilmanovich** told about his and Sialiu’s mother’s visit to prison to collect the prisoner’s things: *“I had to collect the things of the executed person. I had to do it together with his mother, which made it particularly difficult psychologically. Killing one person cannot be fix with the death of another. The Old Testament had the principle of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” The current Christian world lives mainly under the principles of the New Testament. The death penalty is abolished everywhere in Europe. Only the Republic of Belarus is the last island of the wild violence, an example of medieval barbarism.*

Mobile phones, an empty wallet, CDs and cassettes, finally, his belt and shoes... Two boxes of things given to his mother. She herself still does not believe that her son had committed such a terrible crime. It is really hard to believe it when you read his letters that he wrote already in custody, waiting for the worst sentence

and later the inevitable execution. “Departed under sentence” — as it is called in their non-human language, which always conceals and hides the true meaning of events. The current legislation of Belarus provides not only for execution for the most serious crimes, it also lies close to the actual torture of the defendant’s family. The body, under a Stalin-time provision of the law, is not given to the relatives and the place of his burial is also not reported. In a state that can hardly be called legal, it can give rise to various speculations — whether or not the person was shot, was his body used for some anatomical experiments? On the other hand, it gives rise to the illusory hope that he is alive. An extremely hard kind of psychological torture! I do not know how the investigation was carried out in this particular case, but even a cursory review of the guy’s music collection leads to the conclusion that his mind was sick, that a healthy person would not listen to this. And mentally ill people cannot be killed, they should be isolated from society, but not killed. But the law does not actually leave any choice to the judges.

The death penalty does not reduce the evil, but it only multiplies and increases hatred.”

1 Tamara, mother of Pavel Sialiu, receives his things after the execution

2 Death certificate of Pavel Sialiu



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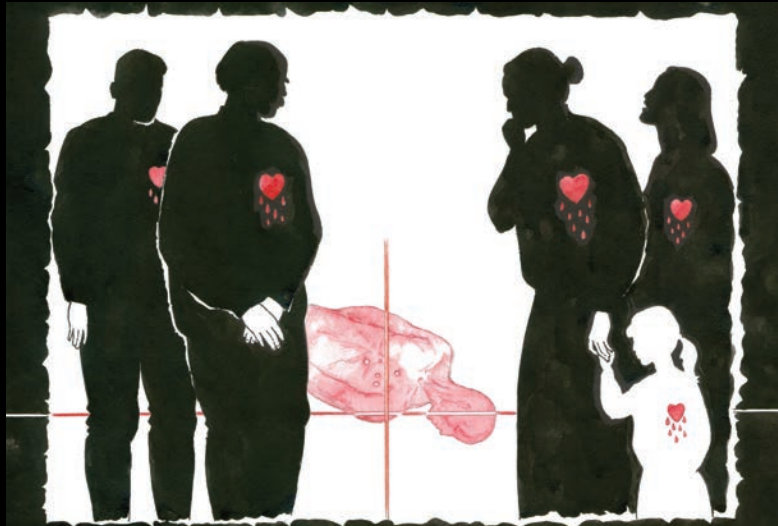


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Posters from the series “Six Arguments
against the Death Penalty”
by **Aleh Ablazhei**. 2014

Posters from the series “Six Arguments against the Death
Penalty” by Aleh Ablazhei. 2014



94

Posters from the series “The Death Penalty is Murder” depicting figures made from bread on death row. Author: **Viktar Tratsiakou**. 2014

Posters from the series “The Death Penalty is Murder”.
Author: Viktar Tratsiakou. 2014



From 5 to 10 October 2014, the Week Against the Death Penalty was held under the slogan “The Death Penalty is Murder”. Several events were held in Minsk: exhibition of posters by artist **Aleh Ablazhei** and works from the world-renowned project Death Is Not Justice; presentation of a project by photojournalist **Siarhei Balai** devoted to the relatives of executed prisoners; public lectures by the Czech politician **Karel Schwarzenberg** and human rights activist **Tamara Chikunova**. The first week against the death penalty took place in 2013 in the framework of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus”.

October 7, the presentation of the joint photo project “Capital Punishment” by the photojournalist Siarhei Balai and the campaign “Human Rights Defenders Against the Death Penalty in Belarus” took place in Minsk.

The event was attended by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Great Britain to Belarus **Bruce Bucknell**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Czech Republic to Belarus **Milan Eckert**, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament of the Czech Republic **Karel Schwarzenberg**, chargé d'affaires of Bulgaria in Belarus **Ivaylo Ivanov**, the guest of honor of the Belarusian Week Against the Death Penalty, a heroine of the photo project “Capital Punishment”, social activist **Tamara Chikunova**, human rights activists and public figures.

Siarhei Balai told the visitors and guests of the Week Against the Death Penalty how he came to the idea of his project:

“I learned from research that more than half of Belarusians sincerely believe that there is a moratorium on the death penalty in Belarus. Later, I received proof. When I talked to the parents and relatives of those sentenced to death, they also said that they had thought this way before getting the terrible news to their houses.”

Tamara Chikunova who had struggled for the abolition of the death penalty in Uzbekistan for eight years and achieved this, told the audience a revealing story of her own life, about how her son was executed, and then it became clear that he was innocent. This tragedy did not break her, it was the fight against the death penalty not only in the country but also in other places.

The Belarusian PEN Center hosted a round table, where **Mr. Schwarzenberg** met with members of the organization — famous writers **Uladzimir Arlou**, **Adam Hlobus**, the head of the Union of Belarusian Writers **Barys Piatrovich**, the head of «Viasna» **Ales Bialiatski**, the head of the PEN Center **Andrei Khadanovich** and diplomats - Ambassador of the Czech Republic **Milan Eckert**, British Ambassador

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- 1 Launch of the Week Against the Death Penalty. Valiantsin Stefanovich, Tamara Chikunova, Andrei Paluda
 - 2 Tamara Sialiun, mother of executed prisoner Pavel Sialiun, at Siarhei Balai's photo exhibition “Capital Punishment”. October 2014





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Bruce Bucknell, chargé d'affaires of Bulgaria in Belarus **Ivaylo Ivanov** and Apostolic Nuncio in Belarus Archbishop **Claudio Gugerotti**. In the evening, Karel Schwarzenberg, together with representatives of the embassies of the Czech Republic, Great Britain, Bulgaria and the head of the Human Rights Center "Viasna" took part in a public meeting in the Gallery Y.

Karel Schwarzenberg said: *"Today we are talking about the death penalty, but I do not know how people who have seen the twentieth century, have not yet taken a decision on this matter. I was born in 1937, in tough times, and even before I finished school hundreds of thousands of people were executed across Europe. And if you remember these murders in Europe, it is simply impossible to imagine how a modern man can support the death penalty."*

Yes, emotions play a very important role in this regard, because if there is another terrible murder, for example, the murder of a child, then there will immediately be the people who will advocate for the death penalty. But, in my opinion, it cannot be the ultimate argument for the death penalty, as we cannot rule out the possibility of a miscarriage of justice. A killed man cannot be returned to life.

The most interesting argument I have ever heard is that life imprisonment is costly to the state. But I ask, what choice do you think is the best: to feed several prisoners for a lifetime, or perhaps execute a few innocent people?

And you cannot deny that the right to life is one of the fundamental rights of a man.

It is clear that the fight against the death penalty sometimes may be very unpopular, someone can say that you are helping the criminals. I am also very sorry for the victims of these criminals. But will it help the victims if their killers are killed too? In every country of the world, there are times when a man must oppose the majority. The twentieth century has taught us that."

Human rights activist and writer Ales Bialiatski noted that the issue of the death penalty also applies to the fate of Belarusian writers. He recalled that in the 1930s most of Belarusian writers were killed by Stalin. *"I view the existence of the death penalty in Belarus today as a direct result of Stalin's era, as Stalin's legacy for our people. The war, which continues not far from Belarus, where people are dying every day, reduces the value of human life. This impairment of life, however, shall not reduce the standards for us. Belarusian culture and literature have always been humane in their essence, have always stood for humanity in the people, seeking this humanity even in the most adverse conditions and situations. Belarusian culture is not a "Russian world", it is a struggle for a civilized man,"* said Ales Bialiatski.

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- 1** Opening of Siarhei Balai's photo exhibition "Capital Punishment". Siarhei Balai, Tamara Chikunova. Minsk, October 2014
 - 2** Czech politician Karel Schwarzenberg and human rights activist Ales Bialiatski during the Week Against the Death Penalty. October 8, Minsk



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Internet action
"Cities for Life".
November 30, 2014



2 0 1 4
0 (?) EXECUTIONS

2 0 1 5

On October 5, 2015, the traditional Week against the Death Penalty opened in Belarus. Its events are held under the slogan “Murder Is Not Justice”. The cruelty and inhumanity of this kind of punishment are symbolized by the death convict’s prison clothes.

The coordinator of the campaign «Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus» **Andrei Paluda** said that through the use of this robe in the posters the campaign activists call on the society to reflect on what stands behind the death penalty — suffering of the relatives of the executed and the cynicism of the state.

“We prepare a special poster to each Week against the Death Penalty”. This year we made use of the robe of Aliaksandr Hrunou that had been sent to his mother after the execution. We had requested to issue the personal belongings of death row convicts to their relatives after their execution. Instead of personal belongings (clothes, diary) the state sent her a prison robe. This caused a severe stress for Aliaksandr’s mother, who saved it and passed it to the campaign against the death penalty. A similar robe was sent to the mother of another death row convict, Pavel Sialun. It was very hard for the mother to endure such cynicism on the part of the state, and she simply burnt the robe.”

A poster for the Week Against the Death Penalty, 2015.
The poster by Viktor Tratsiakou depicts the clothes of death row prisoner Aliaksandr Hrunou

ТЫДЗЕНЬ СУПРАЦЬ
СМЯРОТНАГА
ПАКАРАННЯ
Ў БЕЛАРУСІ
5–10.10.2015



Б Е Л А Р У С І
НЕ

СМЯРОТНАМУ ПАКАРАННЮ

ІВЯСНА
праваабарончы

Н  **забѣрай жыццѣ**

ЗАБОЙСТВА – ГЭТА НЕ ПРАВАСУДДЗЕ

On October 7, 2015, the Vilnius Museum of Genocide Victims hosted a discussion “Murder by verdict”, organized by the Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House and Freedom House.

The discussion was one of a number of activities within the Week Against the Death Penalty in Belarus.

The event included the first screening of the movie “Six Arguments against the Death Penalty” with participation of director **Viktar Tratsiakou**, screenwriter **Palina Stsepanenka**, human rights activists **Andrei Paluda** and **Raisa Mikhailouskaya**. The discussion was moderated by **Vytis Jurkonis**, project director of Freedom House in Lithuania. The event was attended by the special envoy in the region of Eastern Europe of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs **Zhygimantas Pavilionis**.

Mr. Pavilionis focused on the aspect of international cooperation on the issue of abolishing the death penalty. He especially noted that he was very surprised by the position of the Belarusian authorities who hope for the warming of relations with the European Union irrespective of the human rights situation in the country: *“I am personally convinced that Belarusians are a very European nation. However, Belarus can not be perceived by Europe as part of the European identity until the fundamentals of democracy and humanity are laid. The use of the death penalty demonstrates the attitude of the government to its citizens. Unfortunately, I can say that for the time of independence, Belarus has not*

moved forward, but on the contrary, we see only steps backward. I sincerely hope for change in the sphere of human rights and the death penalty in the country.”

The discussion also touched upon the issues of extrajudicial execution in Belarus: human rights activist Raisa Mikhailouskaya told about the unexplained disappearances of opponents of Aliaksandr Lukashenka and the investigation of these cases.

“It could seem that all the disappearances of politicians were not interrelated, but all of them were united by the firing gun. The pistol, from which death verdicts were executed, became the tool for getting rid of political opponents of the regime. These people were not criminals or rapists. It was the country’s elite, and the present deplorable state of our country is a logical result of the political disappearances. We, as human rights activists, demand that those criminal proceedings within which the disappearances have been investigated, be considered as the implementation of extra-judicial executions,” said Raisa Mikhailouskaya.

1 October 7, 2015. The Vilnius Museum of Genocide Victims. The discussion “Murder by Verdict”

2–5 Footage from the documentary “Six Arguments against the Death Penalty”



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And then the door opened and men in gray clothes started walking with their heads bowed.

2



It is cruel to the relatives

3



The execution is a heavy burden, which is shared among all those who are involved in it.

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I will only say one thing: during my exile one executioner died of a heart attack at a fairly young age,

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On October 8, 2015, at the invitation of the Museum of Genocide Victims, campaigners visited the Tuskulėnai Memorial Complex. During Soviet times, executed people were buried here. Executions were carried out in the inner prison of the NKGB in Vilnius in 1944-1947 (now the Museum of Genocide Victims). The executioners feared taking dead bodies into the woods, as there were partisans there, so they buried them in the suburbs. But in the late 50s, the place of mass executions became part of Vilnius.

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- 1 Tuskulėnai Museum. Shoes found during excavations
 - 2 In Tuskulėnai, all the remains are stored in the chapel-columbarium, where coroners work with them
 - 3 Buttons found in the execution pits
 - 4 Museum employee says: *"In 1994-1996, experts conducted archaeological excavations in the territory of the Tuskulėnai estate and found 45 pits containing the remains of 724 people."*
 - 5 Certificate

On October 9, in Minsk, the Human Rights Center “Viasna” presented the documentary book “The Death Penalty in Belarus” which contains information on the issue since 1998.

Within the book there is a review of the history of the death penalty in Belarus, prepared by the historian and journalist **Dzianis Martsinovich**, as well as a large interview with the former head of remand prison No. 1 in Minsk, **Aleh Alkayeu**, under whose leadership about 150 people were executed.

The compendium was created in the framework of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus”, launched in 2009. However, human rights activists started working on this issue ten years before that. This was told by one of the compilers of the book, **Palina Stsepanenka**:

“The Human Rights Center “Viasna” started dealing with this issue in 1998, when one man, Ivan Famin, wrote to the organization from a death row cell that he was being kept there for somebody else’s crimes. “Viasna” started working on that case. Ivan Famin was executed by firing, but eight letters from death row convicts came through him. These materials were included in the review of the human rights situation in Belarus for 1998, which has already turned into a bibliographical rarity, that’s why we included it in our book. Moreover, the history of Famin’s case had a continuation got a continuation already in 2013, when we, activists of the campaign “Human

Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus” went to Berlin to visit Aleh Alkayeu, who headed remand prison No. 1 in Minsk when Ivan Famin was kept there. We took the we had received from there back in 1998, with us. They still had that smell... It gave Aleh Alkayeu shivers when I took these letters out and put them in front of him. He said he knew about them and there was no need to show them to him. He said: “I remember Ivan Famin - he incriminated himself at the trial and was shot for someone else’s crimes. Everyone knew about it...”

The human rights activist and literary worker **Ales Bialiatski** called the interview with Aleh Alkayeu the culmination point of the book:

“I have read his “Firing Squad”, but each time he takes something new out of his memory, which makes me dumbfounded when I read it. I was particularly struck by his report about the cases when people tried to avoid oblivion, knowing that after the execution nobody



On October 9, in Minsk, the Human Rights Center “Viasna” presented the documentary book “The Death Penalty in Belarus” which contains information on the issue since 1998



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would even know the place of their burial. The death row convicts tried to put an end to their lives, successfully or not. He described the case in Minsk when two people hanged themselves on one rope in one cell in Minsk before the execution of the death penalty. They killed themselves, therefore their bodies were issued to their relatives. Another story, recalled by him is from Kazakhstan: a man asked him what he could do to get his body issued to his relatives. Alkayeu answered that he could do it only by killing himself, which the man did promptly, leaving the note "Thanks for the advice".

On October 9, in Minsk, the Human Rights Center "Viasna" presented the documentary book "The Death Penalty in Belarus" which contains information on the issue since 1998



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In **Almaty**, on the World Day Against the Death Penalty, Freedom House Kazakhstan arranged the exhibition of thematic posters by Aleh Ablazhei “Six Arguments against the Death Penalty” within the framework of the Human Rights Film School”.

The exhibition of thematic posters by Aleh Ablazhei “Six Arguments against the Death Penalty”. Almaty, 2015



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2 E X E C U T I O N S

2 0 1 6

The box “Cause of death” in **Siarhei Ivanou’s** case says “*Enforcement of sentence*”. The date is also specified — April 18.

According to **Andrei Paluda**, coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”, earlier the box in the certificate of death only had a dash. This issue has been repeatedly highlighted by human rights activists, and, as a result, the movie “Cause of Death — Dash” was filmed.

The dash was then replaced by the equally vague wording “*Information not provided*”. It is this record that was made in the death certificate of **Pavel Sialiu**, who was executed exactly two years earlier on the night April 18.

ПАСВЕДЧАННЕ АБ СМЕРЦІ	СВИДЕТЕЛЬСТВО О СМЕРТИ
Грамадзянін(ка) ІВАНОЎ	Грамадзянін(ка) ИВАНОВ
СЯРГЕЙ МІХАЙЛАВІЧ	СЕРГЕЙ МИХАЙЛОВИЧ
павіор(ла) 18.04.2016	умер(ла) 18.04.2016
васямнаццатага красавіка дзве тысячы шаснаццатага года	восемнадцатаго апреля дзве тысячы шеснаццатаго года
ва ўзросце 22 гадоў, аб чым у кнізе рэгістрацыі актаў аб смерці	в возрасте 22 лет, о чем в книге регистрации актов о смерти
29 чысла красавіка месяца 2016 года	29 числа апреля месяца 2016 года
зроблен запіс за № 288	проведена запись за № 288
Прычына смерці Приведение приговора в исполнение	Причина смерти Приведение приговора в исполнение
Месца смерці: рэспубліка (дзяржава) Беларусь	Место смерти: республика (государство) Беларусь
обласць (край)	область (край)
район	район
горад (пасёлак, село, вёска) г.Мінск	город (посёлок, село, деревня) г.Минск
Месца рэгістрацыі смерці Аддзел ЗАГС адміністрацыі	Место регистрации смерти Отдел ЗАГС администрации
Цэнтральнага раёна г.Гомеля	Центрального района г.Гомеля
Дата выданні 17 мая 2016 г.	Дата выданні 17 мая 2016 г.
Крайнік сямейнага ліста М.П. Браткоўская	Руководитель отдела И.Д. Братковский
 <p>Г-ЛЮ № 0469955</p>	 <p>Г-ЛЮ № 0469955</p>

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Representatives of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” participated in MediaBarCamp-2016 held on May 26–29 near Vilnius.

Artist Ales Pushkin said, “I’ve reconsidered my views on the death penalty.”



Sixth
World Congress
Against the Death Penalty

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- 1 Representatives of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) during the Congress
 - 2 Sixth World Congress Against the Death Penalty started on June 21, 2016 in the Opera building in Oslo
 - 3 For Liubou Kavaliouva, the mother of Uladzislau Kavaliou executed on terrorism charges, who was part of the Belarusian delegation, the Congress was an occasion to talk about the fate of her son: *“I want the whole world to know that Belarus is the only country in Europe and in the former Soviet Union, where there is the death penalty. As it turned out, people are interested in my son’s case. We brought here booklets with the decision of the Human Rights Committee. We remind about the injustice that happened to my son and me.”*
 - 4 On June 22, in the framework of the Congress, the Human Rights Center “Viasna”, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee held a discussion on the issue of the death penalty in Belarus. Belarus was represented by: **Liubou Kavaliouva**, human rights defenders of the HRC “Viasna” **Valiantsin Stefanovich** and **Andrei Paluda**.

Journalist and writer **Palina Stsepanenko** presented the English version of the documentary book “The Death Penalty in Belarus”. How can the international community, and especially the European Union, help the process of abolishing the death penalty in Belarus? This was related by **Elisabeth Edland**, Policy officer of the Human Rights Strategy and Policy Implementation Division of the EU European External Action Service, and **Florence Bellivier**, FIDH Deputy-Secretary General. Concluding remarks were made by the Secretary General of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee **Bjorn Engesland**.
 - 5 In the evening of June 23, a march against the death penalty was held in central Oslo. The procession started from the Oslo City Hall.



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In October 2016, the first President of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty **Florence Bellivier** visited Belarus in the framework of the Week Against the Death Penalty.

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- 1** Florence Bellivier with the Coalition's poster for the World Day Against the Death Penalty, which this year is dedicated to the subject of terrorism. Minsk, October 4, 2016
 - 2** Representatives of the FIDH mission Florence Bellivier and Sasha Koulaeva with Belarusian human rights activists. Together against the death penalty. Minsk, October 4, 2016



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Poster prepared for the Week Against the Death Penalty under the slogan “The death penalty is irreversible”. The photo is a railway line near Orša, the place of mass executions during Stalin’s regime. Photo by **Viktar Tratsiakou**.

The photo is a railway line near Orša, the place of mass executions during Stalin’s regime. Photo by Viktar Tratsiakou.

ТЫДЗЕНЬ СУПРАЦЬ
СМЯРОТНАГА
ПАКАРАННЯ
Ў БЕЛАРУСІ
5-10.10.2016

НЕ
СМЯРОТНАМУ ПАКАРАННЮ

Н  **забірай жыццё!**
забарона на забір жыцця ў Беларусі

ІВЯСНА
праваабарончы цэнтр

СМЯРОТНАЕ ПАКАРАННЕ НЕЗВАРОТНАЕ

On October 5, in Minsk, representatives of the international community, human rights activists and journalists gathered at the Press Club on the occasion of the presentation of the report on the death penalty in Belarus, to discuss relevant aspects of the problem and possible measures to address it.

The presentation of the report “Death Penalty in Belarus: Murder on (Un)Lawful Grounds”, jointly prepared by FIDH and the Human Rights Center “Viasna”, opened the annual Week Against the Death Penalty.

The event was attended by **Jim Couzens**, Deputy Head of European Union’s Mission in Belarus, **Florence Bellivier**, Deputy Secretary General of FIDH and former president of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, **Sasha Koulaeva**, Head of FIDH’s Eastern Europe and Central Asia Desk, and coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty Belarus” **Andrei Paluda**.

Sasha Koulaeva thanked all those present for attending and expressing an interest in the report and the theme of the death penalty in Belarus. She told about the FIDH mission, which included people of different profiles:

“I must say that for us the mission ended yesterday, when we attended a hearing at the Supreme Court, where another death sentence was confirmed. This gave a very vivid picture of all that we have been doing in recent months. The conditions in which this action takes place are terrible, no matter what happens in essence.”

A terrible ritual and a terrible thing to witness. It’s the condition of the victim’s mother, whose fate seems to be indifferent to the state and the judiciary, as well as the fate of the murderer. All of them are in a terrible mental state, all this is happening with the guards and the dogs around, and suggests the saddest memories and historical parallels.”

On October 5, in Minsk, representatives of the international community, human rights activists and journalists gathered at the Press Club on the occasion of the presentation of the report on the death penalty in Belarus, to discuss relevant aspects of the problem and possible measures to address it



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October 5, 2016. Kurapaty, the place of the Stalin-era executions near Minsk. French human rights activists **Florence Bellivier** and **Sasha Koulaeva**, and Belarusian human rights defenders **Ales Bialiatski** and **Raisa Mikhailouskaya**.

Kurapaty, the place of the Stalin-era executions near Minsk. French human rights activists Florence Bellivier and Sasha Koulaeva, and Belarusian human rights defenders Ales Bialiatski and Raisa Mikhailouskaya. October 5, 2016



For the first time ever, the problem of the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus has been the subject of research by experts and human rights activists at the International Congress of researchers of Belarus, which was held for the sixth time in Kaunas.

On October 7, human rights activists, journalists and relatives of the executed prisoners discussed the theme of the death penalty during a special panel.

Human rights activist **Andrei Paluda**, who was the moderator of the discussion, noted that the issue of the death penalty recently appeared in another sphere — research. He drew attention to the research and publications of human rights defenders on the death penalty, which were recently published: a book of articles and materials “The Death Penalty in Belarus”, as well as the materials of the research mission of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Human Rights Center “Viasna” “Death Penalty in Belarus: Murder on (Un)Lawful Grounds”.

The head of Belarusian Documentation Center, human rights activist **Raisa Mikhailouskaya** focused in her speech on the issue of enforced disappearances of government opponents in Belarus. Reviewing the history of this phenomenon, she remembered the activities of the so-called “death squads” who assisted the authorities in dealing with crime in the early 90s and then led to the physical elimination of politicians and a journalist.

Investigations into the disappearances are continuing, and it is for this reason that the authorities refuse to recognize the dead, bringing the situation to absurdity. They also refuse to combine them into one case, even though they obviously have the same trail.

She believes that the criminal cases of the disappearances should be reclassified to another article of the Criminal Code: *A crime against humanity, as there exists no statute of limitations, and the case cannot be closed after certain time.*

— *Cases of disappearances should be qualified under Article 128 of the Criminal Code – crimes against humanity, disappearances, the consequences of which is the extra-judicial death penalty. These crimes have no statute of limitations.*

Journalist and human rights activist **Siarhei Sys**, who writes about the problems of the death penalty, shared his experience of investigating the most diverse aspects of the death penalty in Belarus in the conditions of state secrets, focusing on the many difficulties and challenges faced by journalists, as well as the ways to overcome them.



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- 1 Liubou Kavaliova, Andrei Paluda and Raisa Mikhailouskaya during the International Congress of Belarusian researchers. October 7, 2016
 - 2 Journalist Siarhei Sys and Liubou Kavaliova



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Human rights activist **Tamara Chikunova**, founder of the Uzbek organization “Mothers against the Death Penalty and Torture”, was forced, due to her activities, to emigrate from Uzbekistan after her only son was executed, and she began to actively help other people sentenced to death.

She said that a few days before, during a private audience with Pope Francis, she passed on a letter from the coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” Andrei Paluda.

“I plucked up courage and I would like to ask you to discuss the question of the death penalty in our country in your conversation with President Lukashenka. I believe that your personal position may help the adoption of a positive decision on this issue, which will not only help our country have a positive image in the world, but will also save the lives of four people sentenced to death, which are currently held on death row,” said he in his letter to the Pope.

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- 1 Tamara Chikunova’s speech
 - 2 Raisa Mikhailouskaya’s speech
 - 3 Liubou Kavaliova



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- 1–4** During the Week Against the Death Penalty, human rights activists handed out the special issue of the Narodnaya Volia about the death penalty. The newspaper was prepared with the support of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland).
- 5–6** On October 9, human rights activists Leanid Sudalenka and Anatol Paplauny were arrested in Homiel during the distribution of the newspaper Narodnaya Volia with the special issue on the death penalty.



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October 8, 2016. Minsk club Re:Public. Within the Week Against the Death Penalty, Belarusian musicians played a big concert in support of a moratorium on executions. The concert “Rock for Life” featured bands **Daj Darohu!**, **Re1ikt**, **MutnajevoKa**, **:B:N:**, **Sciana** and **Tlushch**.

Minsk club Re:Public. Within the Week Against the Death Penalty, Belarusian musicians played a big concert in support of a moratorium on executions. The concert “Rock for Life” featured bands Daj Darohu!, Re1ikt, MutnajevoKa, :B:N:, Sciana and Tlushch. October 8, 2016.



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The day of honoring the ancestors Dzyady. A forest outside Orša, a place of mass executions. Artist **Ales Kazhamiaka** and activist **Aleh Bialiatski** light candles.

Artist Ales Kazhamiaka and activist Aleh Bialiatski light candles. The day of honoring the ancestors Dzyady. A forest outside Orša, a place of mass executions.



Henadz Yakavitski was executed in prison number 1 in Minsk on November 5, 2016 together with Ivan Kulesh and Siarhei Khmialeuski.

The convict's family gave coordinator of the campaign "Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus" **Andrei Paluda** a document from the Minsk Regional Court, which confirms the execution:

"We inform you that the sentence of the Minsk Regional Court of January 5, 2016 to your father Henadz Yakavitski, convicted under part 3 of Art. 174, paragraphs 6, 12 Art. 139 of the Criminal Code to capital punishment, came into legal force on April 8, 2016, and he was executed on November 5, 2016."

The convict's family gave coordinator of the campaign "Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus" **Andrei Paluda** a document from the Minsk Regional Court, which confirms the execution:

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МІНСКІ АБЛАСНЫ СУД

Вул. Свядлова, 3, 220050, г. Мінск
E-mail: obl-minsk@court.by; www.minobsud.gov.by
Тэл./ф. 222-40-39

МИНСКИЙ ОБЛАСТНОЙ СУД

Ул. Свердлова, 3, 220050, г. Минск
E-mail: obl-minsk@court.by; www.minobsud.gov.by
Тел./ф. 222-40-39

24.11.2016

2-3/2016

Яковицкой Александре Геннадьевне

Минская область

Сообщаем, что приговором Минского областного суда от 5 января 2016 года Ваш отец Яковицкий Геннадий Геннадиевич, 30 октября 1967 года рождения, осужден по ч. 3 ст. 174, п. п. 6, 16 ч. 2 ст. 139 УК к исключительной мере наказания – смертной казни - вступил в законную силу 8 апреля 2016 года и приведен в исполнение 5 ноября 2016 года.

Заместитель председателя

Г.Ф. Клещенок

On December 12, 2016, activists of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus” and human rights defenders sent appeals to all the 110 members of the House of Representatives calling for parliamentary hearings to discuss the possibility of a moratorium on the death penalty in our country.

Each petition enclosed the joint report of the Human Rights Center “Viasna” and FIDH “Death Penalty in Belarus: Murder on (Un)Lawful Grounds”.

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4 E X E C U T I O N S

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Paintings
by **Ales Kazhamiaka** for the movie
“The History of the Death Penalty in Belarus”

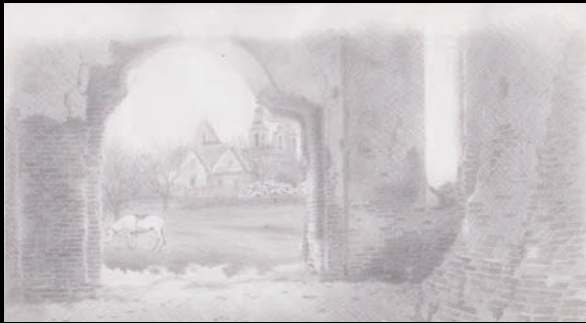
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- 1–3** Paintings by Ales Kazhamiaka for the movie “The History of the Death Penalty in Belarus”
- 4** Viktar Tratsiakou during the filming of “The History of the Death Penalty in Belarus”. Town Smaliany, Orša District, Biely Koviél Castle
- 5** During the filming of “The History of the Death Penalty in Belarus”. An activist of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”, writer and screenwriter Palina Stepanenka and Belarusian historian and archaeologist Ales Krautsevich. Hrodna



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On February 6-7, 2017, in Brussels, human rights defenders of the HRC “Viasna”, FIDH, the UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus and the mother of Uladzislau Kavaliou, hwo was executed in 2012, met with representatives of the European Union.

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- 1** On February 6-7, 2017, in Brussels, human rights defenders of the HRC “Viasna”, FIDH, the UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus and the mother of Uladzislau Kavaliou, hwo was executed in 2012, met with representatives of the European Union
 - 2** On February 8, 2017, a delegation of the Human Rights Center “Viasna” and FIDH were on a working visit to Strasbourg, where the human rights activists discussed with representatives of the Council of Europe the question of the death penalty and the overall situation of human rights in Belarus.

Lawyer of Human Rights Center “Viasna” **Valiantsin Stefanovich**, coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus” **Andrei Paluda** and **Liubou Kavalioua** met in Strasbourg with representatives of the Council of Europe Secretariat. During the day, they held discussions on the situation in Belarus with Ms. **Tatiana Termacic**, head of the Human Rights National Implementation Unit of the Council of Europe’s Directorate General of Human Rights, Mr. **Alexandre Guessel**, Head of the Directorate of Political Advice, and Ms. **Bojana Urumova**, Deputy to the Director at the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights. There was also a meeting with the ambassadors of the European states at the Council of Europe: Ms. **Laima Jurevičienė** (Lithuania), Chairperson of the Rapporteur Group on Democracy of the CoE’s Committee of Ministers (the tasks of this group include relations with Belarus), and Mr. **Guido Bellatti Ceccoli** (San Marino), Chairperson of the Rapporteur Group on Human Rights.



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Chajsy — a forest near Viciebsk. Local residents still remember the executions that took place here in the 1930s. The authorities refuse to recognize Chajsy, a place of Stalinist mass executions.

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- 1 **Yan Dzierzhautsau**, author of the initiative “Chajsy — the Viciebsk Kurapaty”, has been collecting evidence about the crimes of communism since 2004. This is one of the evidences written by the activist: *“Slavik Buyevich told about the executions in Chajsy. His father was a forester. And so father was told once that someone was stealing his wood. They said there were cars in the forest at night. Well, he got the report, so he had to react, or he’d be in trouble. And so he went there in the evening and hid behind a tree. Suddenly, there was a car with headlights on. He was waiting and saying to himself: “Now, I’ll catch you red-handed”. The car stopped at a clearing, the door opened. People got out. Swearing was heard. Many people got out. Then those people were put on their knees. And it was dark, so he did not see that there was a pit. They started shooting. He got down and was lying still until they shot all the people. Then they covered them with soil and planted trees above them. Then he got up, looked at all that and left.”*
 - 2–3 The remains of the victims of Stalinism in Chajsy were dug out by grave robbers in April 2017
 - 4 The personal belongings of the people executed in Chajsy



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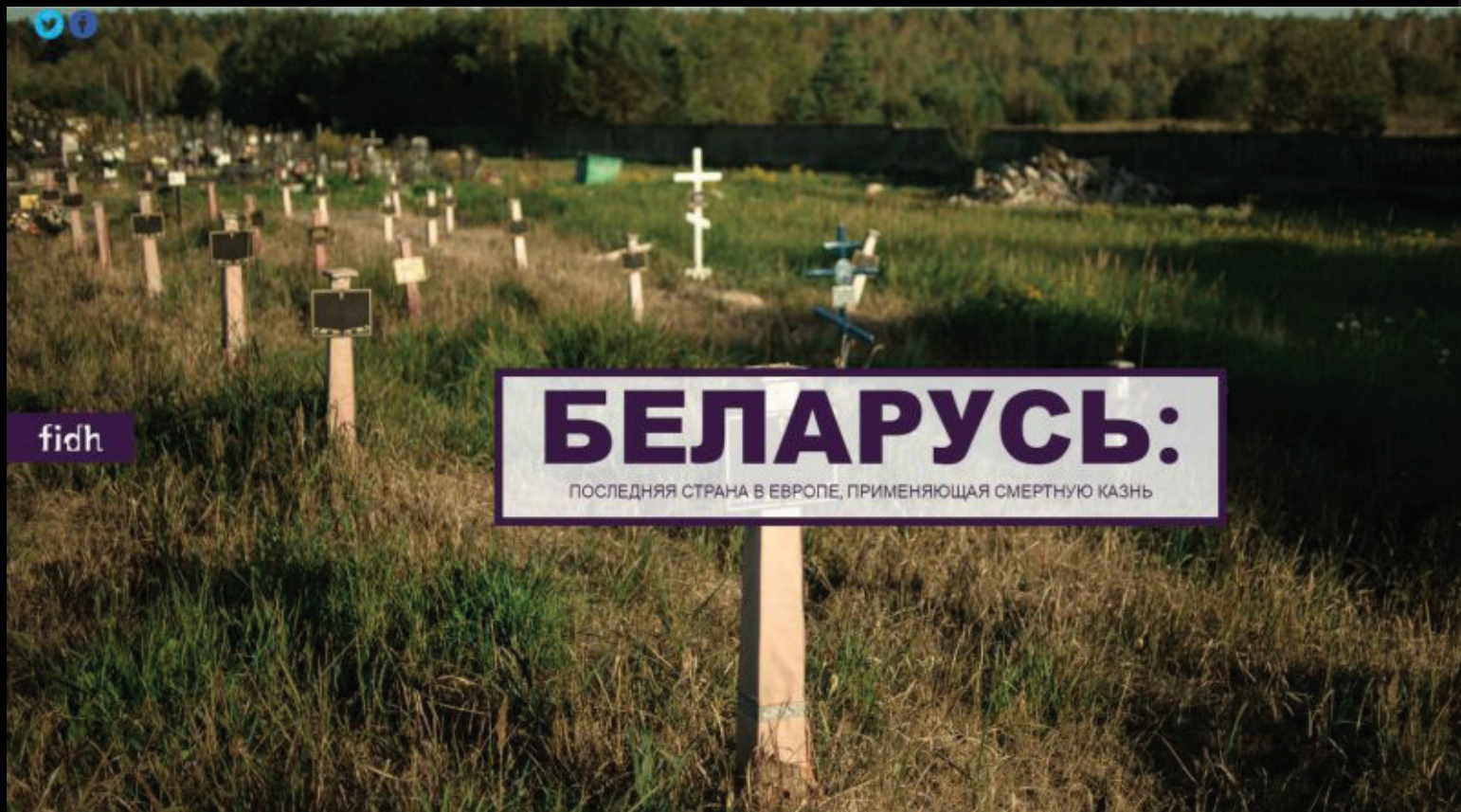
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In 2017, Belarus remains the only European country that carries out the death penalty. In order to expand the information about it, FIDH posts in social networks a video titled “Meanwhile, in Belarus. Time to end the death penalty in Europe.” The video was developed by the communication agency Babel, which used the concept “Meanwhile, in...”.

“Meanwhile, in Belarus” develops the idea of the absurdity of the death penalty in Belarus, which poses a serious challenge for Europe.

In 2017, Belarus remains the only European country that carries out the death penalty. In order to expand the information about it, FIDH posts in social networks a video titled “Meanwhile, in Belarus. Time to end the death penalty in Europe.”



fidh

БЕЛАРУСЬ:

ПОСЛЕДНЯЯ СТРАНА В ЕВРОПЕ, ПРИМЕНЯЮЩАЯ СМЕРТНУЮ КАЗНЬ

On July 6, 2017, human rights activists handed over 18 thousand signatures for a moratorium on the death penalty in Belarus to the Presidential Administration. The signatures were collected within the global campaign of the international human rights organization Amnesty International and were brought to Belarus by an AI representative **Aisha Jung**.

In their petitions, people from around the world urge the Belarusian authorities to impose a moratorium on executions as a first step.

The action near the Presidential Administration was joined by human rights activists of “Viasna” **Ales Bialiatski, Valiantsin Stefanovich** and **Andrei Paluda**.

As the human rights activists were registering the address with the Presidential Administration, Swedish MP **Christian Holm**, who was attending the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Minsk. He supported the action and called for the abolition of the death penalty.

“Firstly, I support the abolition of the death penalty in all countries without exception, including in Belarus,” he said. “I believe that there are other kinds of penalties for dangerous criminals. And secondly, I advocate for ensuring that the judiciary was independent and fair, which will allow to avoid mistakes.”

On July 6, 2017, human rights activists handed over 18 thousand signatures for a moratorium on the death penalty in Belarus to the Presidential Administration.



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A poster for the Week against the death penalty in 2017 under the slogan “Death Penalty is the Past”. The picture was taken in the Chajsy forest near Viciebsk in April 2017. Photo by **Palina Stsepanenka**.

A poster for the Week against the death penalty in 2017 under the slogan “Death Penalty is the Past”. The picture was taken in the Chajsy forest near Viciebsk in April 2017

ТЫДЗЕНЬ
СУПРАЦЬ
СМЯРОТНАГА
ПАКАРАННЯ
Ў БЕЛАРУСІ

5-10.10.2017

С К А Ж Ы
НЕ
СМЯРОТНАМУ ПАКАРАННЮ

Н

забірай жыццё!

Праваабаронцы супраць смяротнага пакарання ў Беларусі

ВЯСНА
праваабарончы цэнтр

СМЯРОТНАЕ ПАКАРАННЕ – ГЭТА МІНУЛАЕ

On October 6, 2017, in the village of Staŭry near Orša, before the presentation of the documentary “The History of the Death Penalty in Belarus”, activists held a discussion on links between mass repressions of the past with today’s practice of the capital punishment called “Mass Repression and the Death Penalty”.

On October 6, 2017, in the village of Staŭry near Orša, before the presentation of the documentary “The History of the Death Penalty in Belarus”, activists held a discussion on links between mass repressions of the past with today’s practice of the capital punishment called “Mass Repression and the Death Penalty”.



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On October 7, the Fantasy Club in Brest and October 8 — the RE:PUBLIC club in Minsk hosted concerts **“Rock for Life”**

On October 7, the Fantasy Club in Brest and October 8 — the RE:PUBLIC club in Minsk hosted concerts “Rock for Life”

On October 9, 2017, the TUT.by gallery in Minsk hosted a discussion on “Comics, Images that can Change the Reality?” and the presentation of the comic book “Mom, it’s me...”, prepared in the framework of the Week Against the Death Penalty.

The event was attended by the coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus” **Andrei Paluda**, employee of the comic book store “Time to be a hero” **Uladzislau Miktum** and social anthropologist, independent researcher of comics **Mikita Trafimovich**.

The panelists discussed how comics could help cover complex topics and communicate ideas to the readers.

The human rights activist noted that this year the Week against the Death Penalty was held under the slogan “The Death Penalty is the Past”:

“And we hope that the death penalty will finally be the past of our history. In this comic, we also tried to remember the past: the Lynch trials in America. At one time, it was very popular to send greeting cards with photos in the crowd on the background of a lynched person. The cards said: “I am in the third row on the right”. So we decided to use it, too, and put two cards in the comic book: “Mom, it’s me on the left” and “Mom, it’s me on the right”, so that people can make their choice depending on their personal position. Perhaps this can be perceived as manipulation, impacting people, but

on the other hand, I am more than confident that the majority of people could never kill someone.”

Uladzislau Miktum said: *“The story gives the example of an innocent man, and it is very easy to empathize with the convict. But it should be understood that regardless of whether a person is guilty or not, he still should not be killed. And if we could convey this idea at least to someone, it will be important. Not that you could be accidentally executed, but that no matter what a person has done, that’s no reason to kill him.”*

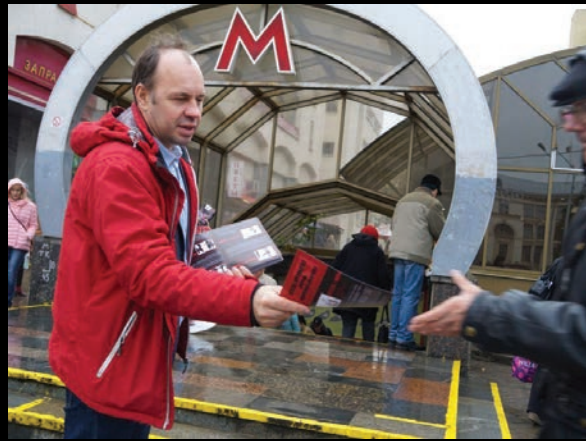
Comics researcher Mikita Trafimovich added: *“The man does not know how it feels to kill another person. And will never know. And if you give him a choice, he can choose anything because he can’t imagine it, he doesn’t know the value of human life. This is for him just an abstraction like democracy. But on the other hand, when I say that I can sentence someone to death, it opens up the possibility of sentencing me. And people can imagine this: by supporting violence, they legitimize it against themselves.”*

On October 9, 2017, the TUT.by gallery in Minsk hosted a discussion on “Comics, Images that can Change the Reality?” and the presentation of the comic book “Mom, it’s me...”, prepared in the framework of the Week Against the Death Penalty.



On October 10, 2017, on the World Day against the Death Penalty, human rights activists took to the streets of Belarusian cities. Thousands of booklets “Six Arguments against the Death Penalty” were given out to the residents of Minsk, Homieĺ, Hrodna, Baranavičy, Rečyca, Svietlahorsk, Maladziečna and other cities.

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4 E X E C U T I O N S

2 0 1 8

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Information on the number of executions in Belarus, according to the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty.” Human rights defenders have to overcome the veil of secrecy that surrounds the issue in Belarus.

Information on the number of executions in Belarus, according to the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty.”

Колькасць асуджаных да растрэлу ў Беларусі



Крыніца:

Кампанія «Праваабаронцы супраць смяротнага пакарання ў Беларусі»

The amateur soccer Winter Cup has finished in Orša. For the second consecutive year, the competition (the Winter Cup and the summer championship) has been organized by the public association “**Zviaz**”. 17 teams have been registered for the winter season. The most thrilling game was that of “**Smaliany**” vs. “**Everest**” of Orša. As a result, “Smaliany” won the Cup. Both teams received prizes provided by the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” and the trade union of radio and electronic industry. Apart from giving free T-shirts with the campaign logo, the activists told the winners about the death penalty in Belarus.

1 “Smaliany” team

2 “Everest” team



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In April 2018, **Andrei Paluda**, coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”, took part in a two-week speaker tour organized by Amnesty International. The event was dedicated to the presentation of the annual report on the state of the death penalty in the world. The participants met with politicians, the public and the media, along with opinion leaders in the field of human rights protection in the European countries. On April 12 Andrei Paluda met with the vice-chairperson of the foreign affairs commission **Mireille Clapot**.

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- 1** **Aliaksandra Yakavitskaya**, Andrei Paluda and vice-chairperson of the foreign affairs commission of the French Parliament **Mireille Clapot** (left to right)
 - 2** Aliaksandra Yakavitskaya and Andrei Paluda at a meeting with French Ambassador for Human Rights **François Croquette**.



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On May 29, the Supreme Court considered an appeal against the sentence to **Aliaksandr Zhylnikau**, who was convicted for the murder of three people. Initially, he received a life sentence, but after re-examination of the case by the Minsk City Court the sentence was reviewed and changed to death. Zhylnikau and his lawyers are asking the court to reconsider the case and commute the punishment to a milder sentence. **Viachaslau Sukharka**, who was sentenced to capital punishment together with Zhylnikau, was also brought to the courtroom, although he had not appealed his sentence. During his speech, he said that two death row inmates, **Aliaksei Mikhalenia** and **Viktar Liotau**, were recently executed.

“For four months, I was on death row together two men whose death sentences had already entered into force. While it isn’t yet in force against me, but no one cares about it. Mikhalenia and Liotau were taken two weeks ago, on the night of May 16,” said Sukharka.

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- 1–2** Aliaksandr Zhylnikau and Viachaslau Sukharka in the Supreme Court
 - 3** Human rights activists Ales Bialiatski and Andrei Paluda during the appeal hearing in Aliaksandr Zhylnikau case



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On June 30, the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty” arranged an excursion to the town of Smaliany to visit the locations where the documentary “The History of the Death Penalty in Belarus” was filmed.

Viktar Tratsiakou, director of the documentary “The History of the Death Penalty in Belarus”, told why Smaliany was chosen as location for the movie: *“A large part of the film, which concerns the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, portrays Smaliany. I really wanted to show this unusual town in the East of Belarus, which has many monuments, the swamp Castle Biely Koviél, the Dominican Church. Distinctive is the atmosphere of the ancient Belarusian town.”*

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- 1** Participants of the human rights excursion on the background of Biely Koviél Castle
 - 2** Participants of the human rights excursion among the ruins of the Dominican Church in Smaliany



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In August, an amateur soccer team of the BPF Party participated in the annual “Freedom Cup” and ranked third. The Players were wearing T-shirts with Uladzimir Tsesler’s emblem “No to the Death Penalty”. The team manager **Andrei Sarotnik** said that earlier when politician **Mikalai Statkevich** and human rights activist **Ales Bialiatski** were in prison, the players played in T-shirts with the images of the political prisoners.

“But this time we decided that would be relevant to speak about the death penalty that exists in our society. Therefore, we decided to wear these T-shirts. I believe that in this way we were able to stage an action,” commented Sarotnik.

Goalkeeper, journalist **Yury Dziashuk**, who lives in Biarozaŭka, notes that in his small town the T-shirt “No to the Death Penalty” attracted considerable interest from local residents.

“After the competition I occasionally wear it. And people in Biarozaŭka sometimes ask what it says, what in general it means and whether I really oppose the death penalty. Once I even had a fight with my classmate, who serves in the army.”

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- 1** BPF Party soccer team at the “Freedom Cup” in 2018. Photo from Andrei Sarotnik’s Facebook
 - 2** Soccer fans from Orša wearing T-shirts with the campaign logo



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Volunteers of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”, together with the activists of the Belarusian Language Society, commemorated the 1863 insurgent Ihnat Budzilovich on the day of his execution, August 28. The head of a rebels’ detachment in Orša, Budzilovich (1841-1963) was executed on August 28, 1863 on the territory of the Jesuit College, which at that time had already been transformed into a fortress prison.

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- 1** **Ihar Kazmerchak**, leader of the Orša branch of the Human Rights Center “Viasna”: *“The situation with the death penalty in Belarus has not changed since the 19th century, when Ihnat Budzilovich was executed. In Belarus, there is still the death penalty, and people are still being shoot here”.*
 - 2** August 28, the village Pahoscišča, Liozna district, Viciebsk region. Volunteers of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”, together with the activists of the Belarusian Language Society, on the site of the last battle and arrest of the 1863 rebel Ihnat Budzilovich.
 - 3** Researcher **Yuras Koptsik** reconstructs the Memorial Cross on the site of the last battle of Budzilovich’s detachment



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October 10 — **World Day Against the Death Penalty**. This year the topic of the 16th World Day was the conditions of detention on death row.

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty brings together more than 150 NGOs, bar associations, local authorities and trade unions. It operates in order to strengthen the international dimension of the fight against the death penalty in its efforts to maintain the trend towards its abolition worldwide.

To date, two thirds of all countries in the world (141) are abolitionist countries both in law and in practice. The Coalition calls for a final end to death sentences and executions in those countries where they are still used. In order to achieve its goal, the Coalition seeks to support member organizations, local, national and regional abolitionist forces, as well as coordinate international advocacy towards global abolition of the death penalty.

The Human Rights Center «Viasna» became a member of the Coalition at the end of 2017.

16th World Day Against the Death Penalty: Conditions of detention on death row. On October 10, the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty will draw public attention to the conditions of detention on death row.

On this day, the World Coalition offers **ten courses of action to join the fight against the death penalty**.

1. Write to a prisoner on death row.
2. Send support messages to their relatives and lawyers.
3. Organize a visit to prison following the World Coalition's guidelines.
4. Organize a public debate and a movie screening with families of people sentenced to death, exonerees, their lawyers and experts. See our mobilisation kit for useful tips!
5. Organize an art exhibition (of art work made by the people sentenced to death, of photographs of death row, of drawings or posters) or a theatre performance...
6. Join the events prepared for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide.
7. Donate to the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty or another group working to end the death penalty.
8. Follow the social media campaign on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter: #nodeathpenalty
9. Mobilize the media to raise awareness on the issue of the death penalty.
10. Participate in "Cities Against the Death Penalty/ Cities for Life" on 30 November 2018.

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- 1 On October 10, The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty will draw public attention to the conditions of detention on death row.
 - 2 Poster of the Week Against the Death Penalty in 2018: "In the center of Minsk they still execute people. Time to stop the conveyor of death."



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Višnieva, Valožyn district. Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mass dedicated to **Saint Ambrose** (340-397), who encouraged members of the clergy not to pronounce or carry out capital punishment.

On October 6, in the town of Višnieva, believers in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary were praying to St. Ambrose for the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus and all over the world. Provost of the church, priest Jozef expressed why a person has no right to take the life of another person. Priest Josef highlighted the possibility of a miscarriage of justice and spoke about the issue of the death penalty in Belarus and all over the world.

The mass was dedicated to Saint Ambrose, who is considered to be the first known abolitionist in the world and invited the Emperor Theodosius the Great to abolish the death penalty. He was a lawyer before he became bishop of Milan, and therefore he based his proposals not only on moral principles, but also on the principles of law. *“From the point of view of our faith, no one should kill a man who at one time will be able to repent until the time of his death,”* wrote St. Ambrose in his treatise “Cain and Abel”.

At the end of mass, believers sang a hymn dedicated to St. Ambrose. The hymn was written by the organist of the church Maryia Trapashka. The hymn has the words: *“St. Ambrose, hear us, hear! From the death penalty save us with prayer!”*.

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- 1** The stone church was built in the 17th century. Its design combines Baroque with Renaissance elements
 - 2** Sculpture of St. Ambrose (left). The sculpture is located in the church of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Višnieva. Sketch, painting — Ales Pushkin.
 - 3** Artist Ales Pushkin
 - 4** Organist **Maryia Trapashka**. Maryia says: *“Thanks to the diligence of provost Jozef, the church acquired the figure of St. Ambrose. I wanted to know who he was. What I learned impressed me a lot. The thought of him never left me. And then the artist Ales Pushkin, who painted the altar in the church, told me: “Write a song!” I even searched the internet songs and poems about him. I found nothing. And so, without having a special creative gift, I set to work. Not all of his biography is reflected in the text. But... we have what we have.”*
 - 5** Mass for the abolition of the death penalty



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October 5 and 7, 2018. Festival “Rock for Life”. Musicians in support of a moratorium on the death penalty (**Nizkiz**, **Petlya Pristrastiya**, **Mutnaevoka**, **SnopSnoŭ** and **Teleport**).

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- 1–3** October 5, 2018. Festival “Rock for Life”. Viciebsk, Cherdachok Beatles Club
- 4** October 7, 2018. Festival “Rock for Life”. Minsk, RE:PUBLIC Club



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05.10 Віцебск
07.10 Мінск

Nizkiz
Sporsnoi
Петля Пристрастия
Teleport
Мутнаевока



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On October 10, 2018.
Forum Theater “A Bullet from Society”.
Mahilioŭ. Center “Kola”.

Forum Theater “A Bullet from Society”.
Mahilioŭ. Center “Kola”.



ФОРУМ-ТЕАТР
КО ДНЮ ПРОТИВ СМЕРТНОЙ КАЗНИ

**«ПУЛЯ ОТ
ОБЩЕСТВА»**

МОГИЛЕВ

10 ОКТЯБРЯ
ЦЕНТР «КОЛА», ПЕР. ЧКАЛОВА, 16

18:30 ВХОД
СВОБОДНЫЙ

On October 8, 2018, **Natallia Satsunkevich**, activist of the Human Rights Center “Viasna”, held a picket against the death penalty near the Belarusian Embassy in London. The event was joined by Amnesty International’s coordinators **Barrie Hay** and **Aisha Jung**. During the rally, the protesters managed to talk with the staff of the Belarusian embassy. According to Natallia, they were polite and expressed interest in the discussion of abolishing the death penalty.

Amnesty International coordinator for Belarus Aisha Jung, Viasna activist Natallia Satsunkevich, and Amnesty International coordinator Barrie Hay



During the Week Against the Death Penalty, Viasna's human rights defenders traditionally took to the streets of Belarusian cities to distribute the special issue of the newspaper "Narodnaya Volia". More than two thousand copies were given out in Minsk just within a few hours.

The information campaign by activists of the campaign "Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus" during the Week Against the Death Penalty. The special issue devoted to the issue of the death penalty in Belarus. The issue consists of works of famous writers, essayists and poets, including **Uladzimir Niakliayeu, Ales Bialiatski, Aliaksandr Fiaduta, Siarzhuk Sys, Siarhei Dubavets, Halina Dubianetskaya, and Palina Stsepanenka.**



On October 10, 2018, the Lithuanian Embassy in Minsk hosted a performance by artist **Tanya Tur**. Also, activists of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus” opened the exhibition “Everyone has the Right to Know their Rights”. The performance told about the suffering of relatives of persons sentenced to death. Lithuanian Ambassador to Belarus **Andrius Pulokas** noted in his speech that Belarus is the only country in Europe where “the state still kills its people”. In Lithuania, the last execution took place in 1995. A year later, a moratorium was declared, and the death penalty was abolished in 1998. *“Over the past 20 years, about 400 people were executed in Belarus. It is difficult to understand it, and it’s difficult to accept. And while there are such things here, we’ll never be at rest!”* Andrius Pulokas said at the event.

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- 1** Performance by Tanya Tour. *“Tanya Tur’s performance helped us feel a little bit the emotions of friends and relatives of persons sentenced to death. We could look at this problem not from the point of view of criminals, crime, but from the other side. The death penalty is a multifaceted concept. Although we are closing the Week Against the Death Penalty, but we are not closing our fight!”* said Andrei Paluda, coordinator of the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus”.
 - 2** Head of the EU Delegation in Belarus **Andrea Wiktorin** and Lithuanian Ambassador to Belarus Andrius Pulokas. Andrea Wiktorin also drew attention to the fact that the death penalty is a broader concept:

“The families are also the victims. They live in the dark, not knowing whether their relatives are alive. Such exhibitions and spectacles are very important. We can argue in abstract terms. But if the issue of the death penalty is show from this point of view, it can change the attitude towards it. We will not give up, we will fight!”
 - 3** British Ambassador to Belarus **Fiona Gibb**
 - 4** Viasna volunteers and human rights activist Andrei Paluda



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A number of current issues were discussed at a meeting of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which took place on October 10 in Strasbourg. One of the topics was dedicated to the World Day against the Death Penalty. Chairperson of the Commission on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives **Valery Varanetski** and lawyer of the Human Rights Center “Viasna” **Valiantsin Stefanovich** spoke on the problem of the death penalty in Belarus.

The head of the parliamentary commission traditionally noted the complexity of the issue with the abolition of the death penalty, saying that Belarus will gradually arrive at abolishing the penalty. He also recalled the results of the referendum in 1996, when the majority of citizens (82%) were in favor of retaining the death penalty, referred to a gradual change in public opinion, recalling that 52% of citizens still favored the death penalty.

Valiantsin Stefanovich briefed the PA about the recent death sentences that have been handed down in January this year and on the enforcement of sentences in May, highlighted some of the issues that are constantly criticized by human rights activists. These include the atmosphere of secrecy, non-issuance of the bodies of executed persons, the issue of handing down death sentences by the Supreme Court, which makes it impossible to appeal against the verdict and the rapid execution of the sentence.

“On this year’s World Day against the Death Penalty, I, as a citizen of Belarus, personally and as a representative of civil society, once again urge the Belarusian authorities to declare a moratorium on the death penalty, as it is primarily in the interests of our Belarusian society,” Stefanovich concluded.

At the meeting of the Committee, the activists presented the latest joint reports of the HRC «Viasna» and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) “Death Penalty in Belarus: Murder on (Un)Lawful Grounds” and “Belarus: Control over Lawyers Threatens Human Rights”.

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- 1** Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Affairs Valery Varanetski, lawyer of the HRC “Viasna” Valiantsin Stefanovich and head of the Lithuanian Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs Emanuelis Zingeris.
 - 2** Employee of FIDH’s Eastern Europe and Central Asia Desk **Julia Ouahnon**



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The filming of the documentary about the campaign “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty”.

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- 1 Director **Viktar Tratsiakou** is preparing to film
 - 2 Volunteer of the campaign, poet **Aliaksandr Makarevich** wears prison clothes for the filming
 - 3 Poet Aliaksandr Makarevich reads the words of his poem he wrote about the feelings of a person sentenced to death during his stay on death row, from which there is no escape.
 - 4 The metaphor of the death row



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On the International Human Rights Day, December 10, the ceremony of awarding the annual National Human Rights Award took place in Minsk. The ceremony was held in the newly opened educational space “Territory of Rights”.

The campaign “**Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus**” won in the nomination “Campaign/Initiative of the Year”. The award was received by the campaign coordinator **Andrei Paluda** and activist **Palina Stsepanenka**.



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4 E X E C U T I O N S

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Office of the Embassy of Switzerland



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Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty. 10 years of fight

Album

Coordinator: **Andrei Paluda**

Editor: **Palina Stsepanenka**

Foreword: **Ales Bialiatski**

Design and layout: **Viktar Korzun**

Idea and compilation: **Andrei Paluda, Palina Stsepanenka**

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for the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus

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