

## Web action – Death Penalty in Europe and Central Asia

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### Make Europe and Central Asia a Death Penalty - Free Zone

Belarus and Uzbekistan are the only countries in Europe and Central Asia still carrying out executions. Sign our petition, and take an important step towards ending the death penalty.



Tamara CHIKUNOVA does not know where her son **Dmitry CHIKUNOV** is buried. Symbolically, she put up a gravestone for him in a cemetery in Tashkent, next to the grave of his grandfather.

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**"It is one of the worst things for me that I do not know where Dmitry is buried. If I knew I would at least have a place where I can go with my grief and where I can talk to him."**

Tamara Chikunova whose son was executed in 2000 in Uzbekistan

Belarus and Uzbekistan are the only countries in Europe and Central Asia that are still executing people.

In both countries, the inhumanity of the death penalty is compounded by the injustice of unfair trials and “confessions” obtained under torture.

Prisoners on death row live in constant fear that they could be executed at any time, and are denied the final chance to say goodbye to their families. After they are executed, their bodies are not given to their relatives for burial, nor are relatives informed of the place of burial.

## **Sign the petition**

By signing our petition, you can help put an end to the inhumanity of the death penalty in Europe and Central Asia once and for all.

I call on the governments of Belarus and Uzbekistan to abolish the death penalty in law and practice, and by doing so make Europe and Central Asia a death penalty - free zone. I call upon them to:

- introduce a moratorium on death sentences and executions;
- commute all outstanding death sentences and fully abolish the death penalty;
- improve prison conditions on death row according to international standards;
- Ensure that relatives of death row prisoners are allowed to have regular and private meetings with the prisoner. If the prisoner is to be executed, their relatives should have the right to say goodbye, and to carry out a private burial.

[Sign]

At the end of the action, the petition will be presented to the Uzbek authorities. A copy of the petition will also be presented to the Belarus authorities and other governments in Europe and Central Asia.

### **Belarus and Uzbekistan: The last executioners**

Belarus and Uzbekistan are the last countries to carry out executions in Europe and Central Asia. In both countries, prisoners on death row and their families are treated with contempt and the injustice of the death penalty is compounded by flawed criminal justice systems.

### **'Turmoil, fear and anguish' on death row**

Three years ago, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed its concern over “the extremely poor living conditions of detainees on death row [in Uzbekistan], including the small size of cells and the lack of proper food and exercise”.

The situation does not appear to have improved since. Conditions on death row in Uzbekistan, Belarus and across Europe and Central Asia fall far short of international standards. Allegations of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment are frequent.

In Belarus, a former death row prisoner alleged he was frequently beaten on his head, back, stomach and genitals by prison guards who reportedly forced him to say “thank you very much” after each beating.

In both countries, death row prisoners and their families are treated with contempt. Neither death row prisoners nor their relatives are informed of the date of the execution in advance, denying them a last chance to say goodbye. The body of the prisoner is not given to relatives for burial, nor are they informed of the place of burial.

The UN Special Rapporteur on torture after a visit to Uzbekistan stated that he believed this level of secrecy to be intentional and aimed at “causing family members turmoil, fear and anguish over the fate of their loved one(s)”. He described the treatment of family members as “malicious and amounting to cruel and inhuman treatment”.

### **Scope for judicial error**

If a country retains the death penalty, it is particularly crucial that trials strictly comply with international human rights law and standards.

The criminal justice systems of Belarus and Uzbekistan have, however, frequently been criticized by local and international organizations.

Amnesty International regularly receives credible allegations of unfair trials, and torture and ill-treatment, often to extract “confessions”. Widespread corruption undermines the independence of the judiciary. Amnesty International has documented dozens of cases in which trials in capital cases violated provisions set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### **The death penalty in Europe and Central Asia:**

When the Soviet Union collapsed in December 1991, all newly independent states retained the death penalty. Nine of these countries have now abolished the death penalty, while four further countries have moratoria on executions in place. Russia is the only country of all 45 members of the Council of Europe that has still not fulfilled its promise to abolish the death penalty, which it made when joining the organization in 1996.

In countries with moratoria on executions, such as Kyrgyzstan, death row inmates may have been waiting years in a state of continued uncertainty as to their ultimate fate, a situation which Amnesty International believes to amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Conditions on death row in the region fall far short of international standards.

### **Deported to execution**

Many countries in the Europe and Central Asia region have deported people to countries where they faced the death penalty. Death sentences in these cases were often passed following unfair trials accompanied by torture allegations. The deportations documented by Amnesty International took place in violation of international treaty obligations undertaken by the countries that facilitated the deportations.

### **Amnesty International against the death penalty**

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty worldwide in all cases without exception. The death penalty is the ultimate denial of human rights. It is the premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being by the state in the name of justice. It is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Like torture, an execution constitutes an extreme physical and mental assault on a person already rendered helpless by government authorities.

Amnesty International is calling upon the governments in the region to make Europe and Central Asia a death penalty - free zone, both in law and in practice



Cell on death row in SIZO No.1 in Minsk, Belarus

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Report: *Belarus and Uzbekistan: the last executioners. The trend towards abolition in the former Soviet space* (AI Index: EUR 04/002/2004)

Media advisory: Uzbekistan: Anti-death penalty speakers' tour Tamara Chikunova – profile and Dilobar Khudaiberganova – profile

AI docs on Belarus/Uzbekistan

Video interview with Tamara Chikunova