

EXTERNAL

24 March 1992

@Death sentence passed on Aleksey Ivanovich VOLKOV
£Republic of Latvia

According to unofficial sources Aleksey Ivanovich Volkov, an ethnic Russian aged 28, was sentenced to death in the Republic of Latvia on 11 September 1991 after being convicted of murder. He is said to have two previous convictions for theft, and to have pleaded guilty to the charge, but it is also alleged that he has a history of mental illness since childhood which was not taken into account as a mitigating factor. Amnesty International currently does not know if Aleksey Volkov has lodged an appeal or a petition for clemency. He is currently held in a prison in Riga, the country's capital.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases and without reservation on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amnesty International is appealing to the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Latvia to exercise his constitutional authority and commute the death sentence passed on Aleksey Volkov.

Background

Recent information on the death penalty in Latvia was given to Amnesty International in a letter from the Minister of Justice dated January this year. He reports that the Criminal Code currently retains the death penalty for nine offences committed under aggravating circumstances, but does not specify them. He explains that the criminal code is currently under review and that when drafting and discussing it parliament will bear in mind relevant international human rights instruments, including the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the first world-wide instrument aimed at abolition of the death penalty). The Minister writes that statistics on the use of the death penalty in the republic have been available since 1989 from the Statistics Board. In that year nine persons were sentenced to death, one of whom received clemency but five were executed. In 1990 five persons were sentenced to death: of these one sentence was commuted but three people were executed. In 1991 four persons were sentenced to death, three of whom were executed. All those sentenced to death and executed in this period had been convicted of premeditated murder under aggravating circumstances.

