

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 93/92

Death Penalty

4 November 1992

REPUBLIC OF LATVIA: Imants PUNENOVŠ
Andris ALKSARS

Amnesty International is concerned that Imants Punenovs and Andris Alksars may soon be executed. The two men were sentenced to death on 15 January 1992 on one count of murder under aggravating circumstances. Their appeals were rejected on 3 July and no judicial review of their sentences was ordered. They have already submitted petitions for clemency. This is the only way in which the death sentences passed on them can now be commuted.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 5 February 1992 the Supreme Council of Latvia reduced the number of crimes which carry the death penalty to seven. Amnesty International has recently learned that five people have been sentenced to death this year. Two people have had their sentences commuted. The organization is appealing on behalf of the three remaining prisoners, including Imants Punenovs and Andris Alksars. Amnesty International has also learned that two executions (not one as previously thought) have taken place this year - one in January and one in May. The organization had previously appealed to the authorities for commutation of the sentence passed in this second case.

A petition for clemency is submitted to the Presidium of the Supreme Council. The petition is examined by the Human Rights Commission of the Supreme Council which then makes its recommendation. The Procurator General and Chairman of the Supreme Court are also consulted by the Presidium of the Supreme Council for their opinions on the case.

Procedures for executions are laid down in joint instructions issued by the Minister of the Interior and the Procurator General. They are not made public. However, in October 1992 during a research mission to the Republic of Latvia Amnesty International was informed by the First Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs that executions are carried out in the investigative isolation unit of Riga Central Prison, usually within 24 hours after the petition for clemency has been rejected. The condemned person is called out from his cell during the night and is shot by a single marksman (not by a firing squad as previously believed).

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and

airmail letters in English, French or German or in your own language:

- appealing for commutation of the death sentences passed on Imants Punenovs and Andris Alksars;

- explaining Amnesty International's opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances without exception;

- urging that the authorities in the Republic of Latvia stop carrying out further executions and appealing for them to consider complete abolition of the death penalty.

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APPEALS TO:

1. The Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia:

Anatolijs Gorbunovs
Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council
Jekaba 11
Riga 226811
Republic of Latvia
Telegrams: Chairman Supreme Council, Riga, Latvia
Telephone: + 7 0132 322938
Faxes: + 7 0132 211611

Salutation: Dear Chairman

2. Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights of the Supreme Council of Latvia:

Andrejs Pantelejevs
Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights
Jekaba 11
Riga 226811
Republic of Latvia
Telegrams: Chairman, Commission on Human Rights, Supreme Council, Riga, Latvia
Telephone: + 7 0132 325868
Faxes: + 7 0132 211611
Telexes: 161148 SU

Salutation: Dear Chairman

3. Chairman of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Latvia:

Gvido Zemribo
Chairman of the Supreme Court
Brivibas bulvaris 34
Riga 226616
Republic of Latvia
Telegrams: Chairman, Supreme Court, Riga, Latvia
Telephone: + 7 0132 289434
Faxes: + 7 0132 213978

Salutation: Dear Chairman

4. The Procurator General of the Republic of Latvia:

Janis Skrastins
Procurator General
Komunaru bulvaris 6
Riga 226150
Republic of Latvia
Telegrams: Procurator General, Riga, Latvia

Telephone: + 7 0132 320085

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Latvia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat or your Section Office if sending appeals after 16 December 1992.