



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU statement on two death sentences in Belarus

On 20 January, the Minsk City Court sentenced to death Vyachaslaw Sukharka and Alyaksandr Zhylnikaw in their retrial. They had initially, in December 2015, been sentenced to life imprisonment before an appeal by a prosecutor was upheld by the Supreme Court on 14 July 2017.

This sentence was handed down one month after the Supreme Court of Belarus rejected the appeal for two death sentences pronounced in July 2017 for Ihar Hershankow and Syamyon Berazhny.

The EU strongly and unequivocally opposes the use of the death penalty at all times and in all circumstances. Death penalty is cruel, inhuman and degrading in nature, even when backed by due process in a democratic society. No judicial system is flawless, and the death penalty makes any miscarriage of justice irreversible. Furthermore, the death penalty is ineffective in fighting and preventing crimes.

The EU calls for universal abolition of the death penalty. Universal abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and the progressive development of human rights. As a step towards universal abolition, the EU advocates for a global moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

As such, the EU calls on Belarus to commute the remaining death sentences and introduce a moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its abolition.

The EU will continue its long-standing campaign against the death penalty, including within the OSCE, and we continue to encourage Belarus and the United States to follow the global trend towards abolition.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.