



23 September 2010  
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**UN Human Rights Council  
Fifteenth, 13 September – 1 October 2010**

**Item 6:  
Consideration of UPR reports**

**Belarus**

Mr. President,

No less than 14 States raised concerns about the death penalty in the review of Belarus.<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International joins them in urging the government to declare an immediate moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty. In a recent meeting with Amnesty International, the head of the Belarusian Parliamentary Working Group on the death penalty confirmed that declaring a moratorium on executions does not require a referendum.

Belarus is the only country in Europe to continue to carry out executions. Most recently, Vasily Yuzepchuk and Andrei Zhuk were executed by a shot to the back of the head in March 2010. Andrei Burdyko and Oleg Gryshkovtsov, both on death row in Minsk, had their appeals dismissed on 17 September, 2010.

We are also seriously concerned that prisoners and their relatives are not informed in advance of the date of execution; in some cases relatives do not know for weeks or even months that the execution has taken place. Svetlana Zhuk, the mother of Andrei, has not been given her son's body for burial and has not been told where he is buried.

Mr President,

There is credible evidence that, under pressure to solve crimes, police investigators sometimes resort to torture and other ill-treatment in order to force confessions. These confessions are subsequently admitted as evidence in trials. Amnesty International notes that Belarus has committed to ensure fair trials and

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/15/16, paragraphs 98.16 and 98.17 (Brazil, Lithuania, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Austria Hungary, Norway, Ireland, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Belgium, Finland and France).

to strictly respect the absolute prohibition of torture.<sup>2</sup> We welcome Belarus' commitment, announced in the Addendum, to introduce a definition of torture into national legislation which reflects Article 1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.<sup>3</sup> We encourage Belarus to implement these recommendations without delay. We further call on the government to ensure prompt, impartial and comprehensive investigations into all complaints of torture and other ill-treatment, as recommended in the review.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, Mr President,

We urge the authorities to take the necessary measures to ensure freedom of expression and association for all, including by simplifying the registration procedures for non-governmental organizations, and by abolishing Article 193.1 of the Criminal Code.<sup>5</sup> In this regard, we urge the authorities to comply with the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee of 24 July 2007 to register the human rights organization, *Nasha Vyasna* (Our Spring), and to compensate the organization for causing it to be dissolved in 2003.

Thank you, Mr President.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, paragraph 97.28 (Austria).

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/15/16, paragraphs 98.21 (Czech Republic) and A/HRC/15/16/Add.1, paragraph 59.

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/15/16, 98.22 and 98.23 (Italy and Spain).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, paragraphs 98.27-98.30 (Lithuania, Norway, Canada, Belgium, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Switzerland).