Mr Alyaksandr Lukashenka President of the Republic of Belarus Vul. Karla Marksa, 38

220016 Minsk

Belarus

Dear Mr President,

Having been alerted by ACAT-Luxembourg (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture and the Death Penalty), which is affiliated to FIACAT, an international NGO in consultative status with the UN, I am writing to you on the occasion of the forthcoming World Day against the Death Penalty (10 October).

The death penalty constitutes the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and is proven not to have any deterrent effect. Whereas worldwide there is a broad trend towards the abolition of the death penalty, Belarus is the only country in Europe to retain it. Moreover, the Belarusian practice of not letting convicts know the time of their execution until the last moment and of denying the convict’s family the right to know the place of burial constitutes additional cruel, inhuman and degrading, which violates the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention against Torture, both of which have been ratified by the Republic of Belarus.

Belarus has several times expressed its intention to decree a moratorium on the death penalty.

The case of **Stanislau and Illia Kostseu** is an opportunity to take such a step. On 22 May 2020, the Supreme Court upheld the death sentences imposed on these two young Belarusian brothers, who have now applied for clemency as their last chance. While there is no denying that the murder they committed is a very serious crime, Stanislau and Illia have expressed their deep regret and cooperated fully with the criminal investigation. Their young age and the difficult circumstances of their upbringing undoubtedly had a bearing on their act and should be considered as mitigating factors. Stanislau and Illia Kostseu are the youngest prisoners to have been sentenced to death in Belarus for over ten years. Their execution would be a terrible stain on Belarus’ record.

I therefore urge you:

* to order the immediate implementation of a moratorium on the death penalty in Belarus;
* following the implementation of a moratorium, to seriously consider abolishing the death penalty in all circumstances, or at least in time of peace, and to gradually sign and ratify the second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (OP 2 – ICCPR);
* to commute the death penalty imposed on Stanislau and Illia Kostseu as a gesture of compassion;
* to lift the secrecy surrounding executions for all pending cases and disclose the place of burial to the families of those executed in the past in order to allow families to visit their loved one’s grave.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name

Adresse signature