

Belarus: Stop the execution of Rico Krieger

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The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Viasna and the undersigned organizations call on the Belarusian authorities to stop the execution of German national Rico Krieger, sentenced to death in Belarus on 24 June 2024.

Paris, 22 July 2024. On 24 June, German national Rico Krieger was [sentenced to death by firing squad](#) by the Minsk Regional Court in a secretive trial. As [reported](#) by Human Rights Center Viasna, Krieger, [a former employee of the German Red Cross](#), was *inter alia* charged with “mercenary activities”, “terrorism”, the “creation of an extremist foundation”, and the “intentional disrepair of a vehicle or communication lines”. While the details of the case and the exact allegations remain unknown, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs [confirmed](#) the death sentence on 19 July.

[According to Viasna](#), Rico Krieger had been detained in October 2023, and convicted on 24 June 2024, in a trial partially held behind closed doors. It remains unknown whether Krieger appealed the sentence, with the [Belarusian authorities and news agencies not reporting about the case at all](#).

Krieger’s trial and conviction is the first known case based on the charges of “mercenary activity” in Belarus. His case [might reportedly be linked](#) to the activities of the Kastuś Kalinoŭski Regiment, a Belarusian volunteer military unit within Ukraine’s Armed Forces fighting against Russia’s aggression in Ukraine.

As [pointed out by Viasna](#), which monitors the application of the death penalty as part of the “Human Rights Defenders against the Death Penalty in Belarus” campaign, it is the first time since the beginning of the campaign in 2009 that a foreign citizen is sentenced to death in Belarus.

Belarus is the only country in Europe that still applies the death penalty, including for crimes like terrorism, treason or certain international core crimes, carrying it out against men only. In light of the grave human rights violations, many of which might amount to crimes against humanity, including the [“numerous and systematic violations of the rights to due process and a fair trial”](#) before Belarusian courts documented by the OHCHR, the use of the death penalty is particularly alarming.

FIDH, Viasna and the undersigned organizations urge the Belarusian authorities to immediately stop the execution of Rico Krieger regardless of the charges, and to fully abide by Belarus’s international human rights obligations, including the right to life, the right to be free from torture and ill-treatment, and the right to due process and a fair trial.

FIDH, as a founding member of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP) and a member of its Steering Committee, Viasna, and the undersigned organizations strongly oppose the death penalty for all crimes and in all circumstances, and recall that capital punishment inherently constitutes torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. The organizations therefore call

on the Belarusian authorities to impose a moratorium and to make further progress towards the abolition of the death penalty.

P.S.

Signatories:

Belarusian Helsinki Committee

Belarusian Human Rights House

European Exchange

International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)

Libereco - Partnership for Human Rights

Östgruppen

People in Need

Respect-Protect-Fulfill

Viasna

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)