

Press Release

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'The passing of another death sentence in Belarus shows the urgent need for a moratorium on executions' according to PACE President

Strasbourg, 02.07.2009 - The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Lluís Maria de Puig, has expressed deep concern about the death sentence passed on a young man in Belarus on 29 June. "The death penalty is a flagrant violation of human rights. It does not serve, but denies justice. No crime could justify it. This is why the Assembly asked its Bureau on 23 June not to lift the suspension of the Belarus Parliament's special guest status until such time as a moratorium on executions has been introduced by the appropriate Belarus authorities," he said.

"This new condemnation to death shows the urgent need for such a moratorium for as long as the legal system still provides for capital punishment. I call on the Belarus authorities not to carry out this sentence and to take the necessary steps to introduce a moratorium, thereby demonstrating their determination to draw closer to the Council of Europe's values and standards, and to take all of us together a little closer to the final elimination of the death penalty from the continent of Europe. In this context, I welcome the decision recently announced by Viktor Huminski, Chair of the National Security Committee, to set up a working group of the lower house of the Belarus Parliament to draw up proposals with a view to putting in place a moratorium on the death penalty."

"The obstacles which have so far prevented abolition of the death penalty can and must be overcome; European experience has shown this to be possible," the President concluded.

The PACE granted special guest status to the Belarus Parliament in 1992. Due to a lack of progress in terms of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, this status was suspended in 1997, and Belarus' request for membership of the Council of Europe was frozen the following year.

[Resolution 1671](#)

[Recommendation 1874](#)

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC) – Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political groups: EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); SOC (Socialist Group); EDG (European Democrat Group); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).