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Foreigners Fighting for Ukraine Sentenced to Death by Russia-Backed Separatist Court

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From left: British citizen Aidan Eslin, Moroccan citizen Saadoun Brahim, and British citizen Sean Pinner.
Vladimir Gerdo / TASS

Three foreign men fighting alongside the Ukrainian army have been sentenced to death by a court in eastern Ukraine's self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic following a lightning-fast trial, Russia's state-run RIA Novosti reported Thursday.

British fighters Shaun Pinner, 48, and Aiden Aslin, 28, as well as Moroccan national Saadun Brahim, were charged with terrorism, committing a crime as part of a criminal group, and the forcible seizure of power.

The court also found the trio guilty of acting as mercenaries, despite the men saying that they were active-duty soldiers serving with the Ukrainian marines. Soldiers who have been captured as prisoners of war cannot be executed under the Geneva convention.

The three accused will appeal the decision, Pavel Kossovan, a lawyer representing one of the men, told the Russian state-run TASS news agency.

The court also told them they could ask for a pardon, TASS reported.

The Donetsk People's Republic's "supreme court" where the men were sentenced is not recognized by the international community.

Aslin and Pinner were captured in April and were later shown on Russian television asking to be freed in exchange for Ukrainian businessman, politician and Putin ally Viktor Medvedchuk. Saadoun was also captured in April.

Britain said it was "obviously deeply concerned" by the sentencing of two of its citizens to death.

"Under the Geneva Convention, prisoners of war are entitled to combatant immunity and they should not be prosecuted for participation in hostilities," a spokesman for Prime Minister Boris Johnson said.

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