

Russian Scientists, Artists Ask Putin to Halt Death Penalty in Separatist Donetsk

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British national Aiden Aslin, Moroccan national Saaudun Brahim and British national Shaun Pinner (L-R back) on trial in the supreme court of the unrecognized Donetsk People's Republic. **Vladimir Gerdo / TASS**

Russian scientists and human rights activists have called on President Vladimir Putin to extend Russia's moratorium on the death penalty to the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DNR).

A DNR court in June sentenced British citizens Aiden Aslin and Shaun Pinner and Moroccan national Saadun Brahim — who fought alongside Kyiv's forces — to death on charges of "mercenary activity" and attempted "forcible seizure of power." Their lawyers have appealed the ruling.

"Mr. President! Vladimir Vladimirovich! We are very concerned about reports of the possibly imminent execution of death sentences handed down in the Donetsk People's Republic," reads the [petition](#) published on Change.org on Tuesday.

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The petition's signatories, who include film director Alexander Sokurov, journalist Eva Merkacheva and physicist Nikolai Rozanov, ask Putin to "suggest" the legal change to Pushilin.

"I really think that the death penalty in the territory where Slavic peoples live, in the space where Christianity works, is generally unacceptable," director Sokurov [told](#) the RBC news website.

The signatories pointed to works by notable Russian thinkers such as Leo Tolstoy and Count Nikolai Mordvinov, as well as the 1744 order by Empress Elizabeth of Russia which temporarily suspended capital punishment in the Russian Empire, to back their argument.

"Mercy is the strength of our [Russian] people. We ask you for mercy. We consider it necessary to abolish the death penalty in the Donetsk People's Republic," said the authors.

Over 200 people have signed the petition so far.

DNR leader Denis Pushilin [said](#) in June that he didn't see any reason "for any mitigation or modification of the sentence" against the three men.

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