

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED IN CHECHNYA

On 9 January, police arbitrarily arrested Chechen human rights defender Oyub Titiev. He was held incommunicado for several hours and remains in detention falsely accused of drug possession. If tried and convicted he could face up to 10 years in prison. He is a prisoner of conscience and must be released immediately and unconditionally.

On the morning of 9 January, traffic police officers stopped and searched the car of **Oyub Titiev**, the Head of the Russian NGO Memorial office in Grozny, Chechnya. This was witnessed by his friend with whom Oyub Titiev had arranged to meet before work. The friend later saw Oyub Titiev's car parked in the backyard of the Kurchaloi police station and got unofficial confirmation from a police officer that the human rights defender was being held there. Oyub Titiev's mobile phone remained switched on but he would not pick it up.

On the same morning, Oyub Titiev's lawyer went to the police station but the police refused to let him in and denied that Oyub Titiev was under their custody. Contrary to the law, the police did not inform his relatives of his arrest nor did they grant him access to his lawyer, holding him incommunicado for several hours. It was only after the Russian Ombudsman and the Head of the Presidential Council for Human Rights intervened, on the request of his colleagues, that the Chechen Ministry of Interior confirmed Oyub Titiev was arrested after finding "approximately 180 grams of a substance with a specific marijuana odour" while conducting the search on his car. Oyub Titiev stands accused under Article 228 of the Russian Criminal Code for unlawful possession of drug substances. If found guilty, he could face up to ten years in prison.

His lawyer got access and was able to talk to Oyub Titiev only around 7 pm. Oyub Titiev has denied the accusations. The court hearing to decide on whether he should be remanded in custody is expected to take place on 11 January. Amnesty International believes that the evidence against Oyub Titiev has been fabricated, and he has been thrown behind bars to silence him and obstruct his work. Oyub Titiev is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his peaceful human rights work, and must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Please write immediately in Russian or your own language calling on the Russian authorities to:

- Release Oyub Titiev immediately and unconditionally, and drop all charges against him;
- Conduct an immediate, impartial and effective investigation into the circumstances that led to Oyub Titiev's arbitrary arrest, including the allegations of planting evidence, and hold anyone found responsible to account;
- Take all measures to end the practice of arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment in Chechnya.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 FEBRUARY 2018 TO:

Prosecutor of the Chechen Republic
 Sharpuddi Muaidovich Abdul-Kadyrov
 Prosecutor's Office of the Chechen Republic
 Ul. Idrisova d. 42,
 Grozny, 36400
 Chechen Republic
 Russian Federation
 Email: procurat-chech@mail.ru
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation
 Yuriy Yakovlevich Chaika
 Prosecutor General's Office
 ul. B. Dmitrovka, d.15a
 125993 Moscow GSP- 3
 Russian Federation
 Fax: +7495 987 58 41/ +7495 692 17 25
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

President of the Russian Federation
 Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin
 ul. Ilyinka, 23
 103132 Moscow
 Russian Federation
 Fax: +7 495 9102134
 Twitter @KremlinRussia
 @KremlinRussia_E
Salutation: Dear President

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ALEXANDER VLADIMIROVICH YAKOVENKO, Embassy of Russia, 6-7 Kensington Palace Gardens, London, W8 4QP Tel: 020 7229 6412

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Oyub Titiev has been working in the Grozny office of Memorial for many years and has been threatened on numerous occasions in connection with his human rights work. He became Head of the office shortly after the murder of human rights defender and Memorial staff member Natalia Estemirova in 2009. Following her killing, many of Memorial's staff members had to leave the country fearing for their lives, and Memorial had to suspend its work in Chechnya for five months.

For the last few months, Oyub Titiev together with other Memorial colleagues, were working on the case of 27 Chechens allegedly forcibly disappeared, and shot dead by the police on the night of 26 January 2017. Russian independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta wrote extensively on this issue. Oyub Titiev's colleagues believe that his detention is an attempt by the authorities to stop him from doing his legitimate human rights work.

In 2014, a criminal case on charges of drug possession was fabricated against a Chechen civil society activist Ruslan Kutaev (UA 66/14). His trial was marred by numerous fair trial violations. While in police custody, Ruslan Kutaev was tortured and otherwise ill-treated. Requests from his defence lawyers to open an investigation into allegations of the use of torture against the activist were rejected. In July 2014, in spite of the overwhelming evidence of his innocence, Ruslan Kutaev was found guilty and given a four-year sentence, reduced by two months on appeal in October 2015. Ruslan Kutaev served his sentence and was released on 20 December 2017. Amnesty International campaigned on Ruslan Kutaev's case and declared him a prisoner of conscience.

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