

URGENT ACTION

DEFENDER'S DETENTION EXTENDED AGAIN

The pre-trial detention of Oyub Titiev, a prisoner of conscience and head of the Grozny office of the Russian human rights group Memorial, has been extended for another month, until 9 June. The Supreme Court of the Chechen Republic rejected an appeal against the extension.

On 25 April, the Staropromyslovsky District Court in the Chechen capital, Grozny, extended **Oyub Titiev's** pre-trial detention for another month, until 9 June. Oyub Titiev's lawyers had not been duly informed in advance about the upcoming hearing and only one lawyer of the three lawyers representing Oyub Titiev, who happened to be in Chechnya at the time, was able to attend. The investigator claimed that the HRD might abscond and thus must be held on remand because "there is no house at the place of his registration and his relatives left Chechnya". Notably, in February, it was the Chechen authorities who demolished Oyub Titiev's house, together with 35 houses in the neighbourhood, to make way for a new development, while his family had left Chechnya in January due to the threats they had received.

On 3 May the Supreme Court of the Chechen Republic started a hearing of Oyub Titiev's appeal against the extension. On the first day of the hearings, Oyub Titiev was not brought to the court and was connected through a video chat from pre-trial detention centre. Following the lawyers' petitions the judge ruled that the hearing must be adjourned until 4 May. On the next day, Oyub Titiev was brought to the court in person and his defence team presented personal guarantees from some prominent public figures that if released on bail, Oyub Titiev would not abscond. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court rejected the appeal and ruled that the HRD must remain on remand. On the same day, the investigator served Oyub Titiev with final charges under Article 228, part 2 of the Russian Criminal Code for possession of large quantity of drugs. The investigation is now over and Oyub Titiev's colleagues from Memorial believe that his trial might start very soon in order to finalize the case before the Football World Cup which will start in Russia on 14 June. Representatives of Amnesty International attended the court hearing in Grozny on 3 May. Oyub Titiev's friends, colleagues and relatives, about 40 people in total including about 15 attendees from Moscow and other cities, used the opportunity to send their solidarity messages to the human rights defender.

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, as he is a prisoner of conscience;
- Pending his release, ensure that Oyub Titiev is protected from torture and ill-treatment;
- Conduct a prompt, impartial and effective investigation into both the circumstances that led to Oyub Titiev's arbitrary arrest and the attacks against Memorial offices and employees, ensuring anyone found responsible is brought to justice in fair trial proceedings.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 JUNE 2018 TO:

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

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

And copies 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

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

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 5/18. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/7702/2018/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 9 January, Oyub Titiev was arrested and held incommunicado for several hours after his car had been stopped and searched on his way to work. The Ministry of Interior confirmed that Oyub Titiev was arrested after "approximately 180 grams of a substance with a specific marijuana odour" was found in his car during the search. Oyub Titiev denied the allegations and insisted that the drugs had been planted in his car. He stands accused under Article 228 of the Russian Criminal Code for unlawful possession of drug substances. If found guilty, he could face up to 10 years in prison. In March, his detention was extended until 9 May on the grounds that Oyub Titiev could abscond and might pose a threat to the judicial process by putting pressure on witnesses and destroying evidence.

The pressure from the authorities on both Oyub Titiev's family and colleagues at Memorial has escalated during his detention. His family have been harassed by the police and, as a result, forced to leave Chechnya. Meanwhile, his lawyer reported being followed by plain-clothed security service operatives. There have also been several attacks against Memorial's offices in the North Caucasus. On the night of 17 January, unidentified masked men set Memorial's office in the neighbouring Republic of Ingushetia on fire. On 19 January, police conducted a search of Memorial's office in Grozny. The Memorial staff fear that some further "evidence" found during the search (unfamiliar cigarette butts contaminated with an unknown substance) could have been planted to incriminate Oyub Titiev. On 22 January, a car, which had been used by Oyub Titiev's lawyer, was set on fire outside Memorial's office in Dagestan. Around the same time, staff members there reported receiving death threats on their phones. On 28 March, Sirazhutdin Datsiev, the Head of Memorial's office in Dagestan, was attacked and badly beaten by an unidentified man. Amnesty International believes that these incidents were connected with the persecution of Oyub Titiev in Chechnya.

Oyub Titiev's colleagues believe that his detention is an attempt by the authorities to stop him from doing his legitimate human rights work.

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.

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 5/18 Index: EUR 46/8400/2018 Issue Date: 14 May 2018