

Emil Kurbedinov: human rights lawyer arrested in Crimea by Russian Counter Extremism officials

7 December 2018

We, the undersigned NGOs, members of the Civic Solidarity Platform, are highly concerned at the news that human rights lawyer Emil Kurbedinov was arrested in Crimea yesterday by officials of the Russian Center for Counter Extremism (further “Center E”). We call on the Russian authorities and the international community to take steps to ensure that he is immediately and unconditionally released.

It is not the first time that Emil Kurbedinov has been subjected to persecution by the Russian authorities in retaliation for his professional work. On 4 August 2016, while Emil was in Rostov-on-Don, unknown individuals tried break into his office and on 26 January 2017 he was detained by representatives of “Center E” in Simferopol and taken to the local office of the Russian Federal Security Services (FSB). On the same day, the de-facto Zheleznodorozhny district court of Simferopol found him guilty under Art. 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation (“propaganda or public display of Nazi or extremist symbols”) and sentenced him to ten days’ detention. While he was in detention his house was searched as was the office of Crimean human rights defenders in Simferopol where he worked.

On 27 October 2018 Emil Kurbedinov’s colleagues and close associates Edem Semedliayev, Liliya Hemeji and Diliaver Memetov were issued a warning about the inadmissibility of extremist activity during a meeting of the Crimean Solidarity movement. On 6 November 2018 a “Centre E” representative visited Emil Kurbedinov’s office with the de-facto prosecutor Valentyn Chuprina and warned him about the inadmissibility of extremist activity.

Emil Kurbedinov won the 2017 Front Line Defenders award in 2017 in recognition of his human rights activity in Crimea.

We strongly condemn the ongoing persecution and harassment of independent lawyers and human rights defenders in occupied Crimea and call on the Russian government to immediately cease their unlawful obstruction of lawyers’ work and human rights activities, as well as the misuse of Russia’s “anti-extremism and anti-terrorism” legislation on the occupied territory to persecute people for their peaceful public, legal and human rights activities. This constitutes a direct violation of international law.

We ask international organizations and foreign governments:

- To call on the Russian government to put a stop to the persecution of Crimean Solidarity activists and lawyers and the obstruction of their peaceful professional activities in occupied Crimea.
- To condemn the use by Russia of “anti-terrorism and anti-extremism” legislation to prosecute lawyers, human rights defenders and civil society activists in occupied Crimea.
- To impose personal sanctions on persons involved in gross violations of human rights in occupied Crimea, as well as on those directly involved in the obstruction of lawyers’ work and persecution of Crimean Solidarity activists. In particular, to impose personal sanctions against representatives of the occupying law enforcement agencies, namely, Sushko Andrei Vladimirovich of the Federal Security Service and Shambazov Ruslan Rinatovich. Both individuals are directly linked with the illegal persecution of Emil Kurbedinov and other Ukrainian citizens, persecuted for political motives, as well as with cases involving allegations of torture such as the cases of Renat Paralamov and Oleksander Kostenko.
- To strengthen sectoral sanctions against the Russian Federation for systematic gross violations of human rights and war crimes in occupied Crimea.

Signatories:

Association UMDPL (Ukraine)

Bir Duino (Kyrgyzstan)

Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (Bulgaria)

Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)

Centre for Participation and Development (Georgia)

Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia)

Crimea SOS (Ukraine)

Crude Accountability (United States)

German Russian Exchange DRA (Germany)

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)

Human Rights Center “Memorial” (Russia)

Human Rights Club (Azerbaijan)

Human Rights House Foundation (Norway)

Human Rights Information Center (Ukraine)

Human Rights Matter (Germany)

Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)

International Partnership for Human Rights (Belgium)

Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties - CILD (Italy)

Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (Kazakhstan)

KRF Public Alternative (Ukraine)
Legal policy research center (Kazakhstan)
Macedonian Helsinki Committee (Macedonia)
Norwegian Helsinki Committee (Norway)
Promo LEX (Moldova)
Public Association “Dignity” (Kazakhstan)
Public Verdict Foundation (Russia)
SOLIDARUS e.V. (Germany)
The Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House (Belarus)
ZARA (Austria)

