



27 January 2017

Public Statement

Interference in professional activities and persecution of independent lawyers in Crimea

On 26 January 2017 in Bakhchysaray, Crimea, Russian security services detained a lawyer, Mr. Emil Kurbedinov. Emil Kurbedinov is among few independent lawyers in Crimea who defend political prisoners.

Mr. Kurbedinov was arrested while driving with his colleague Mr. Edem Semedliaev to participate as lawyers in a search of the house of a Crimean Tatar activist, Mr. Seyran Saliev.

Following Mr. Kurbedinov's detention, searches were carried out in his office and apartment. They were undertaken by the security forces as part of a special operation. Mr. Kurbedinov's lawyer, Mr. Djemil Temishev was for a long time prevented from entering. During the search in the office, all the laptops and office equipment were confiscated.

Right now, the judicial proceedings against Emil Kurbedinov are ongoing in Simferopol. He has been accused of an administrative offence under article 20.3 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation, i.e. propaganda or public demonstration of prohibited symbols, for publication of a video from Hizb ut-Tahrir demonstration in Simferopol in 2013. The sanction under this article is an administrative fine or administrative detention of up to 15 days. According to the recent reports, Emil Kurbedinov has already been sentenced to 10 days of administrative detention.

Emil Kurbedinov is among few independent lawyers in Crimea who defend political prisoners. He is *inter alia* an attorney of Ilmi Umerov, Nikolay Semena, several persons of the so-called 'Hizb ut-Tahrir' case and Redvan Suleimanov, an accused within the so-called 'sabotage' case. Yesterday, Emil managed to get a negative decision of the court on the prolongation of the arrest of Redvan Suleimanov. Moreover, as a lawyer Emil takes part in searches and interrogations, and provides legal assistance to victims of human rights violations in Crimea. He also takes part in international fora reporting on the situation in Crimea. His detention and arrest is, first of all, connected with his professional and human rights activities.

Moreover, yesterday, on 25 January 2017, another lawyer Mr. Nikolay Polozov was detained. Mr. Polozov is an attorney of Ilmi Umerov and Akhtem Chyigoz. When he was leaving his hotel, going to the court, several men approached him and put in a minivan. He was brought to before security services for interrogation as a witness in the Akhtem Chyigoz case. Nikolay refused to testify and was released after 2.5 hours. On 23 January 2017, Nikolay attended a PACE session and gave a speech on human rights in Crimea.

These two incidents together with other instances of putting pressure on lawyers, human rights defenders and activists working in Crimea are a part of a systemic policy of Russian authorities to suppress activities of independent human rights defenders in the peninsula and to execute systematic pressure on lawyers fulfilling their professional obligations. Such a practice, coupled with serious human rights violations, results in the absence of any mechanisms for human rights protection in Crimea.

We urge the Russian Federation to stop this illegal practice against lawyers and human rights defenders, and ask foreign governments and international organizations to take all the measures possible to defend lawyers and human rights defenders in Crimea.

On behalf of the Civic Solidarity Platform:

1. Albanian Helsinki Committee
2. Analytical Center for Interethnic Cooperation and Consultations (Georgia)
3. Association of Ukrainian Human Rights Monitors on Law Enforcement

4. Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House (Lithuania)
5. Belarusian Helsinki Committee
6. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
7. Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Russia)
8. Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)
9. Committee Against Torture (Russia)
10. Helsinki Association for Human Rights (Armenia)
11. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor (Armenia)
12. Helsinki Committee of Armenia
13. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
14. Human Rights House Foundation (Norway)
15. Human Rights Information Center (Ukraine)
16. Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)
17. Human Rights Movement "Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan"
18. Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (Azerbaijan)
19. International Partnership for Human Rights (Belgium)
20. Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law
21. Kharkiv Regional Foundation "Public Alternative" (Ukraine)
22. Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims
23. Legal Transformation Center (Belarus)
24. Minority Rights Group Europe (Hungary)
25. Macedonian Helsinki Committee
26. Netherlands Helsinki Committee
27. Nota Bene (Tajikistan)
28. PO Crimea SOS (Ukraine)
29. Protection of Rights without Borders (Armenia)
30. Public Foundation "Golos Svobody" (Kyrgyzstan)
31. Public Verdict Foundation (Russia)
32. Regional Center for Strategic Studies (Georgia)
33. Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union