

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Russia Federation: Supreme Court denies Igor Sutiagin justice

Amnesty International deeply regrets today's decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation to uphold the decision of the Moscow City Court, which in April 2004 sentenced scientist Igor Sutiagin to 15 years' imprisonment in a strict regime penal colony. Amnesty International renews its concern that the prosecution of Igor Sutiagin is politically motivated.

Igor Sutiagin was found guilty of high treason in a closed trial, which ended on 5 April 2004 and was sentenced to the longest prison term for high treason since Soviet times after a trial which was marred by consistent violations of international standards of fair trial.

Amnesty International is continuing to call for a prompt retrial to be conducted in accordance with such international fair trial standards, and for the release of Igor Sutiagin pending retrial.

Background:

Igor Sutiagin was arrested on 29 October 1999 and charged with high treason through espionage. He was charged with having collated information on Russia's weapons system and passing this on to U.S. military officers in 38 cases. Igor Sutiagin maintains that he gathered the information only from publicly available sources.

In 2001 a regional court in Kaluga found itself unable to understand what concrete information he had passed on and the case was sent back for further investigation. Allegedly the investigation failed to consider all the material Igor Sutiagin had named as sources for his information and concluded that in five of the 38 cases he had passed on information which was not publicly available.

In September 2003 the case was transferred to the Moscow City Court, which passed the sentence on 5 April 2004. Violations of international fair trial standards have marred proceedings throughout the more than four years of the trial, raising serious concerns that the prosecution is politically motivated.

Amnesty International together with Human Rights Watch, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, the Moscow Helsinki Group and the Public Committee for the Protection of Scientists issued a joint statement in June 2004, outlining the concerns in this case, calling as well for a retrial and release from prison pending retrial.

