

URGENT ACTION

DE-FACTO AUTHORITIES DENY HOLDING JOURNALIST

Stanislav Aseev, a freelance journalist, has been missing in the self-proclaimed “Donetsk People’s Republic” (DNR) in eastern Ukraine since 2 June. The pro-Russian separatist authorities in Donetsk deny having any information regarding his whereabouts but Amnesty International has heard from a confidential source that he is under the custody of the de-facto “Ministry of State Security”.

After **Stanislav Aseev** disappeared on 2 June his family began searching for him by appealing to the local police and the de-facto “Ministry of State Security” (MGB). To date, both institutions have repeatedly denied holding any information regarding his whereabouts.

Representatives of the pro-Russian separatist authorities also denied knowing anything about Stanislav Aseev during an official meeting in Minsk on 5 July. This was confirmed by Iryna Geraschenko, the Ukrainian President's Humanitarian Envoy at the Minsk peace talks, who inquired about Stanislav Aseev during the meeting and posted the response received on Facebook.

On 8 July, Amnesty International received information from a source in Donetsk that Stanislav Aseev is currently held by the MGB. It is common practice for the MGB to place individuals they suspect of disloyalty to the “Donetsk People’s Republic” or of “subversive” activities under arrest for 30-days (which can be repeatedly extended), and often to hold them incommunicado, including without acknowledging their determination. The source told Amnesty International that Stanislav Aseev’s detention has been extended. It is not known whether Stanislav Aseev has been charged with any crime. The source wanted to remain anonymous, fearing repercussions.

Stanislav Aseev remains at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Please write immediately in Ukrainian, Russian, English or your own language:

- Urging the de facto authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Stanislav Aseev and, if he is in their custody, not to subject him to arbitrary detention;
- Urging them to immediately end the practice of arbitrary detention of civilians and other violations of human rights by members of forces under their control, including torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 AUGUST 2017 TO:

Head of the DNR

Aleksandr Zakharchenko

Donetsk, Ukraine

Email: op@dnr-sovet.su

Salutation: Dear Mr Zakharchenko

DNR Minister of State Security

Vladimir Pavlenko

Donetsk, Ukraine

Email: mgbdnr@yandex.ru

Salutation: Dear Mr Pavlenko

And copies to:

Ombudsperson of the DNR

Daria Morozova

Donetsk, Ukraine

Email: ombudsman_dnr@mail.ru

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 160/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/6632/2017/en/>

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Stanislav Aseev is a freelance journalist from the pro-Russian separatist-controlled Donetsk who works under a pseudonym, reporting about daily life in the self-styled “Donetsk People’s Republic” (“DNR”). He last spoke to his family by phone on 2 June, saying that he was approaching Donetsk and that he would visit the next day.

On 3 June, when Stanislav Aseev did not appear and there were no answers from his phone, his family went to look for him at the flat where he lives. Despite waiting there for hours there was no sign of him. Increasingly concerned, his family returned to the flat on 4 June, with his landlord. When they opened the door they saw clear signs that the flat had been searched.

Stanislav Aseev’s family has appealed to the local police and the “Ministry of State Security” regarding his whereabouts. As yet, they have not received a response. They have also visited two detention centers in Donetsk, but were not able to find him.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine began in spring 2014, after the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation. In April and May 2014, opponents of the new Kyiv government occupied buildings belonging to the local administrations and law enforcement agencies in several towns in the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions of eastern Ukraine (Donbass). Demanding increased local autonomy or independence from Ukraine, and closer ties with Russia, protest organizers formed armed groups, backed by the Russian Federation, and proclaimed the creation of the “Donetsk People’s Republic” and “Luhansk People’s Republic”. In response, the authorities in Kyiv launched what they characterized as a “counter terrorist operation” (antiteroristichna operatsiya – ATO) aimed at retaking control of the area.

In the self-proclaimed “republics”, local security services operate with no checks and balances, detain individuals arbitrarily and hold them in their own detention facilities. Often, detainees are subjected to 30 days of “administrative detention” during which they have no access to the outside world. Amnesty International and other organisations monitoring human rights have also documented cases when such detainees are tortured and ill-treated in order to extract a forced “confession”, which is then used by a de facto court for conviction.

For more details about such practices, please see the joint report by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch *You Don’t Exist: Arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and torture in eastern Ukraine*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/4455/2016/en/>

Name: Stanislav Aseev

Gender m/f: male

Further information on UA: 160/17 Index: EUR 50/6725/2017 Issue Date: 12 July 2017