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News Flash

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Russian Federation: Released Grigory Pasko reiterates his innocence

Amnesty International reiterates its appeal for the unconditional release of the Russian journalist and environmentalist Grigory Pasko, who was set free today on parole. He served two-thirds of his four-year sentence on treason charges in a prison colony in the Russian Far East.

"Grigory Pasko's release is a victory for the millions of people who campaigned tirelessly on his behalf," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International insists, however, that Grigory Pasko's conviction must be quashed. The organization believes that he was arrested and sentenced solely for exercising his basic human right to freedom of expression.

"As a party to international treaties safeguarding human rights the Russian Federation must clear Grigory Pasko of his charges. Failure to do so will be yet another example of the denial of justice that is the fate of other victims of human rights violations in the Russian Federation," Amnesty International said.

Grigory Pasko, a reporter for a Russian Pacific Fleet newspaper, was first arrested in 1997 for passing allegedly sensitive information to Japanese media but two years later he was acquitted of all spying charges. After an appeal, a Military Court in the city of Vladivostok gave Grigory Pasko a four-year sentence for treason and espionage in December 2001. He is currently appealing this sentence to the Presidium of the Supreme Court.

Amnesty International adopted Grigory Pasko as a prisoner of conscience from the start as it considers him to have been imprisoned solely for the expression of his non-violent beliefs. Its more than one million members in 140 countries around the world have been campaigning with many other human rights organizations for Grigory Pasko's immediate and unconditional release.

Background

In 1993 Grigory Pasko filmed a Russian navy tanker dumping radioactive waste and ammunition in the Sea of Japan. In this film and in a series of articles he exposed the threat to the environment caused by ships of Russia's decaying Pacific Fleet, including nuclear submarines. He also reported on corruption inside the fleet and passed on public information on these issues to Japanese journalists.

Amnesty International believes that his prosecution appeared to be motivated by political reprisal for exposing corruption in the Russian Pacific Fleet and the practice of dumping nuclear waste into the sea. The organization believes that the case is a clear breach of national and international norms protecting freedom of expression that the Russian state is obliged to protect.

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has taken Grigory Pasko's case and is expected to reach a decision by the end of 2003.

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