

URGENT ACTION

DEMAND A FAIR APPEAL FOR ALEKSEI SOKOLOV

Human rights activist Aleksei Sokolov was sentenced on 13 May 2010, to serve five years in a high security prison colony for theft allegedly committed in 2001 and for robbery allegedly committed in 2004. The court cleared Aleksei Sokolov of the third charge in 2004, with regard to allegations of robbery.

Aleksei Sokolov's lawyers stated that the Bogdanovich town court in the Sverdlovsk region of Russia, based its verdict solely on the statements of the co-accused in this case who are already serving prison sentences for other crimes. During the trial the defence lawyers pointed out that these statements often contradicted each other as well as earlier 'confessions' of the co-accused. One of Aleksei Sokolov's lawyers said that while victims of the crimes identified the other defendants in the case as possible perpetrators of the crime, none of them identified Aleksei Sokolov. The court nevertheless considered there to be enough evidence to convict Aleksei Sokolov.

Aleksei Sokolov's lawyer also reported a number of violations of criminal procedure in the handling of the case throughout the pre-trial and trial stage. Amnesty International is concerned that he might not receive a fair trial on appeal and that he might be subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while imprisoned. Aleksei Sokolov had pleaded not guilty to these crimes and intends to appeal against the verdict. He may be a prisoner of conscience targeted solely for his legitimate human rights work.

Amnesty International is concerned that the appeal court might not adequately account for violations of procedural law and that while imprisoned he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian, English or your own language:

- expressing concern that Aleksei Sokolov may be a prisoner of conscience targeted for his lawful work as a human rights defender;
- urging the authorities to ensure Aleksei Sokolov is provided with a fair trial on appeal.
- urging the authorities to ensure that Aleksei Sokolov is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated while he remains in custody.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 JUNE 2010 TO:

Sverdlovsk Region Governor
Aleksandr S. Misharin
Ul. Maksima Gorkogo, 21/23
Yekaterinburg
Sverdlovsk Region
620075 Russian Federation
Fax: +7 343 362 15 13
Salutation: Dear Governor

Sverdlovsk Region Prosecutor
Yurii A.Ponomarev
Ul.Moskovskaia, 21
Yekaterinburg
GSP 1036 Sverdlovsk Region
620219 Russian Federation
Fax: +7 343 377 02 41
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Prosecutor General
Yurii Ya.Chaika
Ul. Bolshaya Dmitrovka, 15a
Moscow GSP-3
125993 Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 692 17 25
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And Copies to:

Ombudsperson of the Russian Federation
Vladimir P.Lukin
Ul.Miasnitskaia, 47
Moscow
107048 Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 607 74 70

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fifth update of UA 128/09 (EUR 46/011/2009). Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/011/2009

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Aleksei Sokolov is a founder and the head of the Russian human rights organization *Pravovaia Osnova (Legal Base)* which campaigns against torture and other ill-treatment of detainees in the Russian Federation. The work of *Legal Base* brought about several investigations against law enforcement officers on allegations including the use of torture to coerce suspects to "confess."

Aleksei Sokolov became prominent after he publicized and distributed a film about torture and other ill-treatment in a temporary holding centre in prison colony IK-2 in Yekaterinburg. The film received wide coverage, both in Russia and internationally, and led to the closure of the temporary holding centre.

He was also investigating possible corruption in some law-enforcement agencies in Yekaterinburg: some officials, according to his findings, had helped to cover up impunity in the temporary holding centre in Yekaterinburg.

In 2008 Aleksei Sokolov was appointed a member of the Public Commission for the control of places of detention and conducted a series of visits to detention facilities in this capacity. He got suspended from this position following his detention in May 2009.

In 2008 he learned that several prisoners were being pressured into claiming falsely that he had been involved in crimes including the robbery in 2004, on suspicion of which he has been in custody since 13 May 2009. Investigations into the theft in 2001 and the robbery in 2004 had been closed several times because the perpetrators could not be identified, but were re-opened shortly before Aleksei Sokolov's arrest.

When in July 2009 the Sverdlovsk Regional Court ordered that he should be discharged until his trial, instead of being released, the police told him that he was then arrested on suspicion of another robbery committed in 2004. Later prosecution added charges of theft of metal pipes from a factory in 2001.

Shortly after his detention, police allegedly threatened to torture him because of his work in defence of human rights.

Further information on UA: 128/09 Index: EUR 46/016/2010 Russia

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