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Russian Federation: Environmental activist Grigory Pasko faces new imprisonment risk

A day before the military section of Russia's Supreme Court prepares to consider the conviction and sentence of journalist Grigory Pasko who was jailed for peacefully exercising his freedom of expression, Amnesty International urges that his conviction should be quashed.

Grigory Pasko was arrested by Federal Security Service (FSB) officers in November 1997 for treason and espionage, after he exposed the Russian navy's illegal dumping of nuclear waste off the coast of Vladivostok. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment by the military court in Vladivostok in July 1999, but released from detention under an amnesty.

"Grigory Pasko has already been subjected to 20 months of pre-trial detention, including 10 months of solitary confinement. The continuing actions of military prosecutors against Grigory Pasko amount to judicial persecution," Amnesty International said today.

"By harassing those who expose environmental crimes, the Federal Security Service is demonstrating a perverse and, in the wake of the Chernobyl experience, potentially disastrous misconception of where Russia's national security interests lie," said Amnesty International today. "The authorities' security policy should not run counter to Russia's human rights obligations."

In a media interview given in July 1999, when Vladimir Putin was head of the FSB and the Security Council, he characterized the Russian environmental movement as a Trojan horse for espionage by foreign powers, and called Grigory Pasko a spy. This year President Putin

abolished the independent governmental environmental inspection committee.

"The Russian security services' action against international networking by environmental activists threatens to deter Russians from engaging in global civil society," said Amnesty International.

The treatment of Grigory Pasko is part of an emergent pattern of persecution of environmental activists by the Russian authorities. In September 2000 the Supreme Court dismissed an attempt by the Prosecutor General, backed by the FSB, to overturn the acquittal of retired naval officer and former prisoner of conscience Aleksandr Nikitin, whom they similarly charged with treason and espionage for having written about the environmental dangers posed by the decaying nuclear submarines of Russia's Northern Fleet.

For a background briefing on the Grigory Pasko case, please ask for our background document in the press office.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org> (see the report *Russian Federation: Grigory Pasko, prisoner of conscience*, published 15 February 1999, AI Index EUR 46/07/99)

The appeal hearing will take place at the Military Collegium of Russia's Supreme Court in Moscow, beginning at 10am Tuesday 21 November 2000. The address of the court is Povarskaya ulitsa, 15.

Material in the original Russian language on the case of Grigory Pasko has been compiled on the website www.index.org.ru

Russian non-governmental organizations which are assisting in the defence of Grigory Pasko may be contacted on the following Moscow telephone numbers: The Russian PEN Centre, tel. (+ 7 095) 209 45 89; the Glasnost Defence Foundation, tel. (+ 7 095) 201 44 20.