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Russia: Drop ‘absurd and damaging’ piracy charge against Greenpeace activists

The “piracy” charge levelled against activists from the global environmental group Greenpeace today in Russia is absurd and damaging to the rule of law and must be dropped immediately, Amnesty International said.

“These absurd piracy charges are completely unfounded against activists who appear to have been engaged in peaceful protest. They make a mockery of the Russian justice system and should be dropped immediately,” said John Dalhuisen, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director at Amnesty International.

“The Russian authorities have clearly decided to make an example of the Greenpeace activists in order to discourage future protests of this kind. Sadly this is consistent with the Russian authorities’ attitude to protest more broadly.

“Should there be any reasonable ground to bring any other charges against any member of the Arctic Sunrise activists and crew, they should be promptly informed and released. Any conditions imposed on their liberty must be reasonable. Any charges brought should be consistent with international and Russian law and must not be excessive in relation to the actions of these activists who were engaged in peaceful protest.”

Those officially charged today were among a group of 30 activists of various nationalities who were violently detained on 19 September, when armed Russian authorities boarded their ship the Arctic Sunrise in the Pechora Sea off Russia’s northern coast.

According to Greenpeace, they include: Russian cameraman Roman Dolgov, freelance videographer Kieron Bryan (UK), and the Greenpeace activists Sini Saarela (Finland), Dima Litvinov (Sweden/USA), Ana Paula Alminhana Maciel (Brazil), Anthony Perrett (UK), Camila Speziale (Argentina), Faiza Oulahsen (Netherlands), Mannes Ubels (Netherlands), Tomaz Dziemianczuk (Poland) and a Ukrainian crew member. The “piracy” investigation into the remaining crew members is ongoing and a formal decision in their cases is expected soon.