



To: Health Professional Network

From: Health and Human Rights Team

Date: 23 December 2005

Health professional action

Mikhail Trepashkin

Russian Federation

Summary

Mikhail Trepashkin is in urgent need of medical attention which the prison colony at which he is imprisoned is not able to provide. On 20 October 2005 he was seen by a doctor in the nearby town of Nizhnii Tagil who recommended him to be admitted to hospital. However, according to his lawyers, the prison administration is refusing to allow him to be transferred to hospital.

Background information

Health

The prison colony in which Mikhail Trepashkin is being held is termed as a prison settlement, or 'village-type settlement' which means that prisoners should be allowed to leave the confines of the colony to purchase food, medicine and other items in the nearby town. However, from 21 September until 20 October Mikhail Trepashkin reportedly was refused permission to leave the colony in order to have a medical examination and purchase medicine, despite suffering from asthma, and reportedly was not being provided with sufficient medication by the prison administration.

On 20 October 2005, Mikhail Trepashkin was finally allowed to leave prison colony IK-13 near Nizhnii Tagil, Sverdlovsk oblast, and was seen by a doctor in Nizhnii Tagil. The doctor diagnosed Mikhail Trepashkin as suffering from a moderate form of bronchial asthma with periods of increased severity as well as itching dermatosis. The doctor recommended for him to be admitted to a hospital for constant monitoring and treatment. However, instead, prison colony guards accompanied him once to a chemist in the town to buy medicine. Reportedly, this treatment was inadequate but Mikhail Trepashkin has not been permitted to purchase more medicine and has not received any further medical care.

According to Mikhail Trepashkin's lawyer who subsequently visited him on 24 November, he has been suffering from asthma attacks on a daily basis, in particular at night, for over three months. He is also suffering from pain in the area of his heart. The lawyer stated that he looked very ill during her visit on 24 November, very pale and drawn, with dark circles around his eyes.

Mikhail Trepashkin suspects the water and air in the prison colony are being contaminated by heavy metals from the industrial site next door to the colony. Mikhail Trepashkin states that he has increased difficulties breathing and his asthma has become more severe. Reportedly he and other prisoners have developed a skin condition which Mikhail Trepashkin attributes to the poor quality of the water in the prison colony. When he was first being held in the prison colony previously he drank water from the tap, after which his skin became covered in red itchy patches. He had been working as a prison cleaner but currently has permission not to work because of his poor health.

Criminal case

Mikhail Trepashkin, a lawyer and former security service officer, was convicted in May 2004 of illegal possession of ammunition (Article 222 of the Russian Criminal Code) and revealing state secrets (Article 283). He was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in a prison settlement colony (kolonia poselenie) following a criminal investigation and trial that was marred by serious fair trial violations and during which he allegedly was ill-treated. Human rights groups in Russia are convinced that the criminal case against Mikhail Trepashkin was fabricated in order to halt his investigative work into the 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow. Mikhail Trepashkin had been working as a consultant to the independent commission set up to investigate these bombings, chaired by Duma Deputies Sergei Kovalev and the late Sergei Yushenkov. In particular, Mikhail Trepashkin had been asked to investigate allegations of security service complicity in the bombings – which had officially been attributed to Chechen separatists. Since mid 2002, Mikhail Trepashkin had also been acting as a legal representative to the family of one of the victims of bombings. His clients have since been granted political asylum in the USA.

Mikhail Trepashkin was released from prison colony IK-13 on parole on 30 August 2005, but was re-detained at his home in Moscow on 18 September by law enforcement officials, including members of the security service, who had no warrant to arrest him. He was taken by car to Ekaterinburg where he was held in a pre-trial detention facility, without court sanction, before being transferred back to the prison colony IK-13.

While conditions in some prison colonies across Russia are reported to have improved, many colonies raise concerns. Torture and ill-treatment in prison colonies is regularly reported. In 2005, prisoners in regions including Kursk, Ulyanovsk, Smolensk and Mordovia conducted organized protests, including hunger strikes and mass self-harm, against harsh conditions and ill-treatment.

Recommended action

Please write to the authorities below, using the following as a guideline:

- Explain that you are a health professional and are writing about the case of Mikhail Trepashkin, held in prison colony IK13;
- Express concern at reports that he is in urgent need of medical treatment for severe asthma attacks and has been recommended by a doctor in Nizhnii Tagil to be admitted to hospital for monitoring and treatment;
- Ask the authorities if any treatment is planned, urging them to provide him with access to full and appropriate medical care immediately;

- Express concern about reports of polluted water and air at the prison colony and urging that steps are taken to ensure that conditions of detention meet international standards, such as the *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*.
- Invite a response.

Addresses

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Please also write to diplomatic representatives of the Russian Federation accredited to your country.

If you receive no reply within six weeks of sending your letter, please send a follow-up letter seeking a response. Please send copies of any letters you receive to the International Secretariat, attention of Health and Human Rights Team.