

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **FREE GRIGORY PASKO NOW! Russian Federation: Amnesty International demands the immediate acquittal and release of journalist and environmental activist Grigory Pasko**

Amnesty International appeals for the immediate acquittal and release of the Russian journalist and environmentalist Grigory Pasko who is serving a four year sentence on treason charges in a prison colony in the Russian Far East.

"Grigory Pasko's conviction and continuing arrest solely for exercising his basic human right of freedom of expression is 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. International and Russian human rights organizations vigorously protested against the arrest and in 1999 he was acquitted of all spying charges. A court in the Russian Far East sentenced Grigory Pasko on a lesser charge and released him immediately under an amnesty. But after an appeal, a Military Court in the city of Vladivostok gave Grigory Pasko a four years sentence for treason end espionage in December 2001.

Amnesty International adopted Grigory Pasko as a prisoner of conscience from the start as it considers him to be imprisoned solely for the expression of his non-violent beliefs. The International Human Rights Day on 10 December is a focal point for all its members in 140 countries around the world to take action for Grigory Pasko's immediate and unconditional release.

"International pressure was crucial in the first trial against Grigory Pasko. Renewed efforts of human rights organizations may result now in his release. I am sure that the European Court of Human Rights will take up his case and its decision will be damning for the Russian justice system," said Russian human rights activist Aleksei Simonov.

"The information released by Grigory Pasko did not constitute a threat to Russian national security and he should not have been imprisoned in the first place. As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to other international human rights treaties the Russian Federation should fulfil its obligations and protect human rights as they are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. By releasing Grigory Pasko without delay the Russian government will show a clear commitment to promote and protect fundamental human rights for everybody," the organization said.

#### **Background**

The case - 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 showed 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 he 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.

Grigory Pasko's defence team is appealing to the Presidium of the Russian Supreme Court to overturn the verdict and order his immediate release.

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