

URGENT ACTION

SHAMAN APPEALS FORCED HOSPITALIZATION

On 25 February, a Russian court in south-western Siberia will consider the prolongation of the forcible psychiatric hospitalization of shaman Aleksandr Gabyshev. The hearing will take place inside the psychiatric hospital. Aleksandr Gabyshev has been arbitrarily declared “insane” and incarcerated in a mental institution for his vocal criticism of President Vladimir Putin.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

**Prosecutor of Novosibirsk Oblast
Yakov Yevgenyevich Khoroshev**
Ul. Kamenskaya, d. 20a
630099, Novosibirsk
Russian Federation

Online form (Russian only): https://epp.genproc.gov.ru/web/proc_54/internet-reception/personal-receptionrequest
CC: Ombudsperson of Novosibirsk Oblast, Nina Nikolaevna Shalabaeva
Email: pochta-upch@nso.ru

Dear Prosecutor,

*I am writing to urge you to address the human rights violations of **Aleksandr Gabyshev**, a 52 years-old resident of Yakutsk, and ensure his immediate release from the psychiatric hospital where he has been placed arbitrarily in connection with his vocal criticism of President Putin and his intent to walk from Yakutsk to Moscow in protest.*

On 25 February, the Zayeltsovsky District Court of Novosibirsk will consider the prolongation of Aleksandr Gabyshev's forcible hospitalization at Novosibirsk Specialized Type Psychiatric Inpatient Hospital With Intensive Supervision. According to international law and standards, deprivation of liberty on grounds of mental illness is unjustified if not strictly necessary to protect the safety of the person or of others. During the initial hearings on forced hospitalization of Aleksandr Gabyshev in Yakutsk City Court and Supreme Court of the Republic of Yakutia (Sakha) in July and September 2021, no sufficient evidence was presented in court to determine if he was a danger to himself or to others, and fair trial guarantees were not respected during the proceedings.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Russia is a state party, forbids the deprivation of liberty based on the existence of any disability, including mental or intellectual. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur on torture has said that medical treatment administered in the absence of free and informed consent may amount to torture or other ill-treatment.

By depriving Aleksandr Gabyshev of liberty for his peaceful activism, the Russian authorities are in violation of their obligations under international human rights law, including in relation to the rights to freedom of expression and association, and the right to a fair trial. I call on you to take all necessary steps to ensure the cessation of forced hospitalization of Aleksandr Gabyshev, and that he is not persecuted for his peaceful activism.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 25 February, the Zayeltsovsky District Court of Novosibirsk will consider prolongation of forcible psychiatric hospitalization of shaman Aleksandr Gabyshev. The decision to hospitalize him was taken in July 2021 by Yakutsk City Court and upheld in appeal in September 2021 by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Yakutia (Sakha), on account of him being recognized “insane” in connection with his peaceful criticism of President Putin and his promise to use his shamanic powers “to purge” Putin from the Kremlin.

After his first attempt to walk on foot 8,500 kilometres from Yakutsk to Moscow to “purge” Russian President Vladimir Putin from Kremlin “using shamanic powers” in September 2019, Aleksandr Gabyshev has been targeted multiple times by the authorities. He was first arrested in September 2019 by armed and masked law enforcement officials who took him away from a camping site without revealing their identities or explaining their actions. He was placed in a psychiatric institution but released shortly and placed under surveillance as he was designated a suspect in a case of “public calls for extremist activities” (Article 280(1) of the Criminal Code). The second attempt to confine Aleksandr Gabyshev took place in May 2020, when the authorities held him in a psychiatric ward for two months, allegedly for refusing to be tested for COVID-19. He was medically examined and found to be “suffering from over-valuing of his personality” because he had expressed ideas intended “to harm the government,” and the court approved his forcible hospitalization. After an international solidarity campaign, he was released on 22 July 2020.

The latest round of Aleksandr Gabyshev’s persecution started on 27 January 2021, days after he had announced that he was again preparing to walk to Moscow. Under the pretext of Aleksandr Gabyshev having missed his visits to a psychiatrist, the authorities sent some 50 law enforcement officers in riot gear, lead by the Deputy Interior Minister of Yakutia and accompanied by doctors, to his home in Yakusts, and detained him. In the process, Gabyshev allegedly tore a riot police officer’s uniform and injured him with a ceremonial Yakut sword. On 2 February, the Yakutsk City Court ruled to confine Gabyshev to a psychiatric ward for medical examination, and three weeks later, the Investigative Committee announced that he was officially charged with making “calls for extremism” and “using violence against police officers”. On 18 March, the medical experts announced that they had discovered “signs of insanity”.

On 26 July, the Yakutsk City Court decided to confine Aleksandr Gabyshev to the Yakut Republican Psychoneurological Dispensary for an indefinite period while the investigation into his case was ongoing. On 23 September, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Yakutia (Sakha) upheld the decision. After that, Gabyshev was transferred to Novosibirsk Specialized Type Psychiatric Inpatient Hospital With Intensive Supervision, some 1,000 km from his home in Yakutsk, and has remained there since.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 1 April 2022

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Aleksandr Gabyshev (he/his)