

URGENT ACTION

BODY OF MISSING LAWYER HAS BEEN FOUND

The body of missing Ukrainian lawyer, Yuri Grabovski, was discovered on 25 March in a shallow grave in woods, about 100 km outside of Kyiv. The authorities must guarantee the safety of his colleague, Oksana Sokolovskaya, and the new lawyer who has replaced Yuri Grabovski, and ensure that they can defend their clients without any hindrance.

Yuri Grabovski had been acting as the defence lawyer in a high profile and deeply politicised case since 2015 and had repeatedly denounced the harassment and intimidation he was subjected to by the Ukrainian authorities. He was last seen in his office in Kyiv on the evening of 6 March after taking documents relating to the case from his safe and leaving with an unknown man.

Following Yuri Grabovski's disappearance on 6 March, two suspects were arrested, one of whom reportedly disclosed the whereabouts of Yuri Grabovski's body, which was found on 25 March. According to Ukraine's Chief Military Prosecutor, Anatoliy Matios, Yuri Grabovski had been beaten and shot. An explosive bracelet was wrapped around his ankle and may have been used by his captors to ensure his compliance. On 29 March, during a press conference, Anatoliy Matios presented a video, supposedly retrieved during the investigation, in which a visibly distressed Yuri Grabovski makes a statement refusing to defend his client Aleksandr Aleksandrov. Anatoliy Matios did not disclose any other information because of the ongoing investigation. Aleksandr Aleksandrov has since hired **Valentyn Rybin** as his new lawyer.

Yuri Grabovski's colleague, **Oksana Sokolovskaya**, a defence lawyer in the same case, had requested to be put under an official protection scheme after Yuri Grabovski's disappearance on 6 March. She was finally granted bodyguards from the Security Service of Ukraine on 28 March, after Yuri Grabovski's body was discovered.

During the investigation into Yuri Grabovski's disappearance, the authorities seized some legal documents related to Aleksandr Aleksandrov's case. The Ukrainian authorities must guarantee the access to these documents by the new lawyer and must ensure that the confidentiality of the lawyer-client relationship is fully respected.

Please write immediately in Ukrainian, Russian or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to ensure that the murder of Yuri Grabovski is promptly, effectively and impartially investigated, including identifying the author of the video presented on 29 March, and that those responsible are brought to justice in a trial which accords with international fair trial standards;
- Urging them to ensure that Oksana Sokolovskaya can safely and independently carry out her legitimate work as a lawyer without obstruction or harassment;
- Calling on them to guarantee the safety of Valentyn Rybin, the new lawyer of Aleksandr Aleksandrov, and ensure that he has full access to previous case materials and is able to defend his client safely and effectively, in accordance with the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 MAY 2016 TO:

Acting Prosecutor General of Ukraine

Yuriy Sevrak
Vul. Riznytska 13/15
01601, Kyiv, Ukraine
Fax: +380 44 280 2603
Email: press-service@gp.gov.ua
Salutation: Dear Acting Prosecutor General

Head of the Security Service of Ukraine

Vasyl Hrytsak
Volodymyrska St., 35
01034, Kyiv-34, Ukraine
Fax: +380 44 279 30 40
Email: pressinfo@ssu.gov.ua
Salutation: Dear Colonel-General

And copies to:

Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine
Arsen Avakov
Bohomoltsa str. 10
01024, Kyiv, Ukraine
Fax: +380 44 256 16 33
Email: mvsinfo@mvsinfo.gov.ua

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 67/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR50/3694/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Oksana Sokolovskaya and Yuri Grabovski have been acting as the defence lawyers for two Russian citizens, Yevgeny Yerofeyev and Aleksandr Aleksandrov, respectively. Yevgeny Yerofeyev and Aleksandr Aleksandrov were injured and captured by Ukrainian forces in May 2015 in Lugansk Region, eastern Ukraine, following a battle between Ukrainian and pro-Russian separatist forces there. The Ukrainian authorities accuse them of being active Russian servicemen, something which they reportedly initially confirmed but later denied. They are charged with illegal border crossing, illegal possession of arms and involvement in terrorist activity. The Russian authorities denied that either of them were acting members of the Russian military at the time of their capture and insisted that both had earlier resigned from military service and had come to Ukraine as “volunteers”.

Since starting work on the case, both Oksana Sokolovskaya and Yuri Grabovski have repeatedly spoken publicly about the harassment and intimidation they have been subjected to by the Ukrainian authorities which, they have said, was an attempt to obstruct them from effectively defending their clients.

Yuri Grabovski was last seen in his office in Kyiv on the evening of 6 March. He took documents relating to the case from his safe and left with an unknown man. On 3 March he had posted on his Facebook page that he anticipated further harassment by the authorities to “destroy all of our evidence and intimidate any lawyers who ‘dare to go against the will’ of the system.” Around the time of his disappearance, uncharacteristic posts appeared on his Facebook page including one on 9 March saying he had left Ukraine against his will, out of concern for his safety.

Oksana Sokolovskaya began work on the case in May 2015, and a month later a criminal case was filed against her accusing her of causing grievous bodily harm during a domestic dispute dating back to July 2014. The Kyiv Prosecutor’s Office initially requested for her to be detained for 60 days arguing that she could abscond or influence witnesses. The judge refused the request but the Prosecutor appealed. The appeal hearing is scheduled for 23 March. Oksana Sokolovskaya claims the case is fabricated and intended to prevent her from carrying out her legitimate work to defend her client. Following Yuri Grabovski’s disappearance, Oksana Sokolovskaya asked the authorities to place her under an official protection scheme. Her request for state protection was granted on 21 March by a court decision and she received bodyguards from the Security Service of Ukraine on 28 March.

Name: Oksana Sokolovskaya (f), Valentyn Rybin (m) and Yuri Grabovski (m).
Gender: both

Further information on UA: 67/16 Index: EUR 50/3734/2016 Issue Date: 31 March 2016