

URGENT ACTION

SOKOLOV'S DETENTION EXTENDED FURTHER

A court has rejected Alexei Sokolov's appeal, and extended his pre-trial detention until 25 December. He appears to have been detained solely for his peaceful human rights activities, and is unlikely to receive a fair trial. He is still at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

The Sverdlovsk Regional Court based its 25 November decision to extend **Alexei Sokolov's** pre-trial detention on the gravity of the charges he is facing. It thus ignored a Supreme Court ruling of 29 October that no one on trial should be remanded in custody if non-custodial treatment was possible. The Regional Court did not follow the Supreme Court's guidelines, and consider whether Alexei Sokolov was likely to abscond, interfere with the investigation of the case or be a threat to any of the parties to the case. Neither did it examine whether there was even a prima facie case against him. The Court claimed it had taken into consideration that Alexei Sokolov had no previous convictions, was of good character, was in employment and had a permanent place of residence; he is also the father of young children and is involved in activities for public benefit. Despite this, the court ordered that he be remanded in custody like the other suspects in this case, all of whom have previous convictions.

Alexei Sokolov's lawyers pointed out in the appeal that his detention had become unlawful on 7 November, as the lower court had only upheld the previous order to keep him in detention until 6 November. The Sverdlovsk Regional Court, having overridden the lower court's decision by keeping Alexei Sokolov in custody, extended his detention to 25 December, at which point it may be extended further. According to one of Alexei Sokolov's lawyers, the Regional Court's action was unlawful, as no requests to extend Alexei Sokolov's detention had been submitted.

This is the latest in a series of violations of criminal procedure since Alexei Sokolov was detained. The inadequate explanation for the extension of his detention began much earlier in his trial. It is feared that he will not receive a fair trial. Amnesty International believes that Alexei Sokolov may be a prisoner of conscience, detained for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression in the course of his lawful human rights activities. His trial has been moved to a court in Bogdanovichi, which is about 100 km from his home in Yekaterinburg, making it very difficult for his family and international observers to attend hearings.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian, English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to release Aleksei Sokolov on bail immediately;
- Demanding that they grant Aleksei Sokolov a prompt and fair trial;
- Urging them to ensure that he is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated while he remains in custody;
- Calling on them to demonstrate respect for the lawful work of human rights defenders, and ensure they are free to pursue their lawful activities without fear of repercussions.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 21 JANUARY 2010 TO:

Prosecutor General

Yurii Ya. Chaika
Ul. Bolshaia Dmitrovka, 15a
Moscow GSP-3
125993 Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 692 17 25

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Sverdlovsk Region Prosecutor

Yurii A. Ponomarev
Ul. Moskovskaia, 21
Yekaterinburg
GSP 1036 Sverdlovsk Region
620219 Russian Federation
Fax: +7 343 377 02 41

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Ombudsperson of the Russian Federation

Vladimir P. Lukin
Ul. Miasnitskaia, 47
Moscow
107048 Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 607 74 70

And copies to: diplomatic representatives of the Russian Federation accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 128/09 (EUR 46/011/2009). Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/011/2009 and www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/020/2009

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

SOKOLOV'S DETENTION EXTENDED FURTHER

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Aleksei Sokolov is the head of the NGO *Pravovaia Osnova* (Legal Basis), which campaigns against torture and other ill-treatment of people held in Russia's prisons and detention centres. He became prominent after he publicized and distributed a film about torture and other ill-treatment in a temporary holding centre in Yekaterinburg called IK-2. The film received wide coverage, both in Russia and internationally, and led to the closure of IK-2. The work of Legal Basis brought about several investigations into police and prison colony staff, accused of crimes including the use of torture to force suspects to "confess."

He was also investigating possible corruption in some Yekaterinburg law enforcement agencies: some officials, he found, had helped to cover up the impunity in IK-2. In 2008 he learned that several prisoners were being pressured into claiming falsely that he had been involved in crimes including the 2004 robbery, on suspicion of which he has been in custody since 13 May 2009.

While he has been in custody, police have threatened to torture him because of his work in defence of human rights.

When the Sverdlovsk Regional Court ruled on 31 July that he should be released to await trial, the police charged him with theft and kept him in custody. His pre-trial detention has been extended several times by the Leninskii district court in Yekaterinburg. On 20 October, a judge in the same court ordered that he be detained until 6 November. On 2 November, another judge ruled that Aleksei Sokolov's case should be transferred to a different district court and upheld a previous order to detain Aleksei Sokolov until 6 November.

Further information on UA: 128/09 Index: EUR 46/028/2009 Issue Date: 11 December 2009

