

AI INDEX: EUR 46/40/99  
22 November 1999

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **Russian Federation: Russian Security Services vs Aleksandr Nikitin, the trial continues**

British human rights lawyer and Essex University professor Bill Bowring will be observing on behalf of Amnesty International the latest trial of Russia's high-profile human rights defender Aleksandr Nikitin, which starts in St Petersburg tomorrow.

Aleksandr Nikitin faces up to 20 years in prison for what the Russian authorities describe as an act of treason, and what Amnesty International and the Russian human rights movement call peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. Amnesty International continues to call for all charges against Aleksandr Nikitin to be dropped.

*After writing two chapters for a Bellona Foundation report on the risks of radioactive pollution from Russia's Northern Fleet, Aleksandr Nikitin was arrested by the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) on 6 February 1996 and charged with espionage and revealing state secrets. Amnesty International adopted him as a prisoner of conscience.*

*Aleksandr Nikitin was held in pre-trial detention until he was released on 14 December 1996, but the charges against him remained and he was officially restricted to the city limits of St Petersburg pending trial.*

At the first hearing of the case in October 1998, Judge Sergey Golets of the St Petersburg City Court ruled that the FSB's indictment for treason and espionage against Aleksandr Nikitin was too unclear and based on expert evidence unacceptable to the court. In February 1999, the Supreme Court upheld this ruling. The indictment was the result of three full years of investigation by the FSB.

In July 1999, the FSB issued the eighth consecutive indictment for espionage and revealing state secrets against Aleksandr Nikitin. The text of the indictment has again been classified as a state secret, and according to Nikitin and his lawyers, is nearly identical to last year's indictment.

The trial is due to take place tomorrow at 11 am at the St Petersburg City Court, Naberezhnaya Reki Fontanki 16, St Petersburg, Russia.

ENDS.../

\*\*\*\*\*  
**Mariana Katarova, Researcher on the Russian Federation will be available for comments regarding the case of Aleksandr Nikitin on +44 171 413 5674 or through Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on 44 171 413 5566. For more information please also visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>**