

URGENT ACTION

PEACEFUL PROTESTER COULD ACHIEVE JUSTICE

A preliminary investigation into the circumstances of the assault against Margarita Yudina started in May. Margarita Yudina was seriously injured by a police officer in front of cameras on 23 January 2021 during a peaceful protest in St Petersburg in support of opposition leader Aleksei Navalny. The start of this investigation is a positive development which could lead to the prosecution of the assailant. There have been no further attempts of harassment in relation to her sons and daughter.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

Margarita Yudina was seriously injured by a police officer in front of cameras on 23 January 2021 during a peaceful protest in the Russian city of St Petersburg in support of opposition leader Aleksei Navalny. She peacefully approached two police officers and asked why they had just arrested a protester. In response, one of the officers kicked her in the stomach. Margarita Yudina fell on the ground injuring her head and had to be hospitalized in an intensive care unit. While still recovering from her injuries at the hospital, she was visited by a TV crew and a police officer who issued an apology to her on camera.

After Margarita Yudina indicated her intention to file a formal complaint about the incident and insisted on a formal investigation, officials from the Prosecutor's Office and child protection services unexpectedly visited her home in the town of Luga, Leningrad Region, where she lived with her two sons (25 and 20-years-old) and her 15-year-old daughter. This usually happens when the authorities consider taking underage children into state care. The visit caused her deep distress and she had to be briefly hospitalized again. On 28 January, the head of the local administration was quoted in the media saying that child protection services "had questions" regarding the living conditions of Margarita Yudina's 15-year-old daughter. He also hinted that Margarita Yudina's sons should be considered for military conscription. In March, Margarita Yudina's lawyer reported that the military conscription office intended to call up her sons "to go through necessary formalities" for conscription despite at least one of her sons having a medical exemption from military service. However, no further action followed.

According to the government data, around 17,600 people were detained in connection with the pro-Navalny protests in January and February. Thousands of people were issued with large fines or sentenced to several days in detention under administrative law, and at least 90 criminal cases were initiated against participants and organizers of the protests across the country. However, not a single investigation has been initiated so far into the unlawful use of force by the police. In May, the authorities launched a preliminary investigation into the circumstances of Margarita Yudina's assault. The investigator questioned several witnesses, collected video evidence from CCTV cameras and initiated a medical examination confirming Margarita Yudina's injuries. If following the results of the preliminary examination, the investigator decides to initiate a criminal case against the police officer, Margarita Yudina could be the first protester who has a chance to achieve justice. We will continue to monitor this case.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Margarita Yudina (she/her)

THIS IS THE SECOND AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 19/21

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/3695/2021/en/>

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