

URGENT ACTION

MEN APPEAL CONVICTION FOR ART EXHIBITION

On 12 July, Yurii Samodurov and Andrei Yerofeev were found guilty of ‘inciting hatred or enmity’ and ‘denigration of human dignity’ and ordered to pay a fine. On 4 October, the Moscow City Court will hear their appeal against this judgment. Amnesty International believes that they are being prosecuted for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Yurii Samodurov, former director of the Sakharov Museum, and **Andrei Yerofeev**, former head of the department for contemporary art at the State Tretyakov Gallery, were charged under Article 282(2) of the Russian Criminal Code and put on trial in Taganskii District Court for organizing a contemporary art exhibition in Moscow in 2007.

The exhibition *Forbidden Art 2006* gathered together a number of works of art that had been refused inclusion at various exhibitions in 2006. It contained works by some of Russia’s most well-known contemporary artists, such as Ilya Kabakov, Alexander Kosolapov, the group Blue Noses, Aleksandr Savko and Mikhail Roginskii. The art presented included a photomontage of a photograph of a frame of an icon and a photo of caviar inside the icon. Other examples incorporated reproductions of religious paintings with the figure of Mickey Mouse inserted.

The prosecution claimed that Yuri Samodurov and Andrei Yerofeev had arranged the exhibition in such a way that it denigrates Christianity, and especially the Russian Orthodox faith, and incites hatred against Orthodox and other Christians. Trial observers stressed that out of 134 prosecution witness statements only three witnesses had admitted to having seen the works. One of them admitted, in his own words, he had only "glanced" at the exhibition. None of the witnesses could name an individual who had been incited to hatred or enmity against the Orthodox faith after visiting the exhibition. Despite this, the witnesses claimed that the exhibition did incite hatred. The prosecutor concluded that if at least two people felt their religious feelings had been insulted by the exhibition this was enough to invoke Article 282 and asked the Court to sentence the exhibition organizers to three years imprisonment.

Amnesty International believes that the exhibition *Forbidden Art 2006* does not incite hatred. The organizers of the exhibition were peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and they should not have been prosecuted.

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

- Expressing concern that Yuri Samodurov and Andrei Yerofeev were prosecuted solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- Urging the authorities to stop the criminal prosecution of Andrei Yerofeev and Yuri Samodurov and to close the case against them.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 9 NOVEMBER 2010 TO:

Prosecutor General of the

Russian Federation
Yurii Yakovlevich Chaika
Prosecutor General's Office of the RF
Ul. B.Dmitrovka, d.15a
125993 Moscow GSP-3
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 987 58 41

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

President of the Russian Federation

Dmitry Anatolievich Medvedev
ul. Ilyinka, 23
103132 Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 9102134

Salutation: Dear President

And copies to:

Ombudsman of the Russian Federation
Vladimir Petrovich Lukin
Ul.Miasnitskaia, 47
107084, Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 607 74-70

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Russia accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 139/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/023/2010/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Yurii Samodurov, together with curator Ludmila Vasilevskaia, had previously received a conditional sentence after conviction for inciting hatred following their organization of an exhibition entitled *Caution! Religion!* in 2003, also at the Sakharov Museum in Moscow. Amnesty International considered that this earlier exhibition did not incite hatred either, and that Yurii Samodurov and Ludmila Vasilevskaia were sentenced solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

The Andrei Sakharov Museum opened in May 1996 to commemorate victims of political repressions in the USSR, but also functions as an NGO working to promote human rights and democratic values in Russia. It is a regular venue for conferences and other public events organized by human rights NGOs in Russia.

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